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COMMONWEAL

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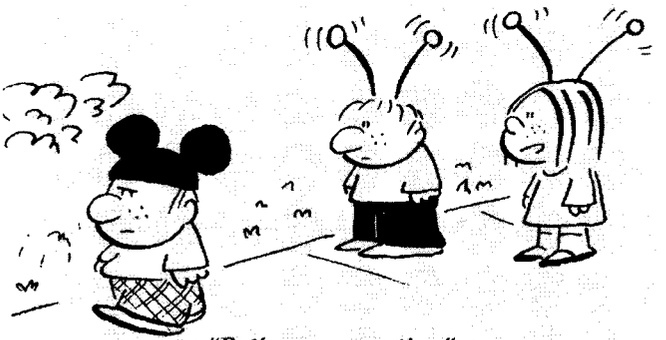

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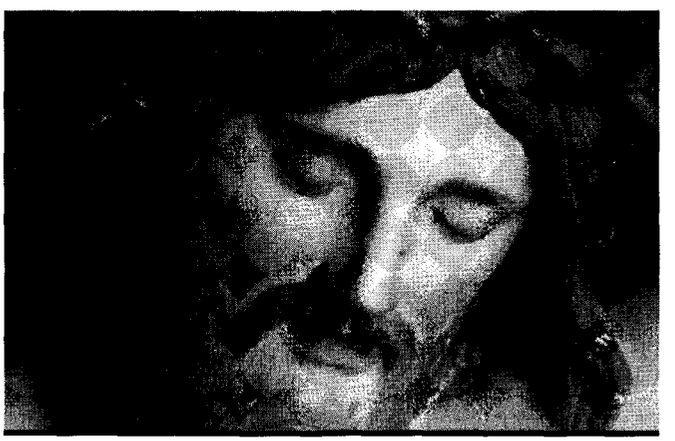

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To the Editors

For shame, sort of

Shocked!—that's what I was—shocked, when I came across your parody [back page, February 9] of what I took to be the *New Oxford Review*. *New Ostrich Review*? That was cruel. Funny, but cruel. You know as well as I do that as former Anglicans the *Review*'s editors feel it necessary to be *plus papiste que le pape*. They offer the very finest nineteenth-century magazine currently available. It is wrong to make fun of other people's afflictions, and I am ashamed of you.

(REV.) ANDREW L. J. JAMES
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Bad taste, but...

Re: "Do Catholics Have Bad Breath?" I'll bet Sister used to wash your mouths out with soap. Your taste is atrocious. But I must say I relish it. Good job.

ANDREW GALLIGAN
Tracy, Calif.

Inside humor

For more than thirty-five years, I have found *Commonweal*'s editorial judgments consistently responsible and intelligent. Even when I have disagreed with the views expressed in editorials or articles, I have never thought the material in question was unworthy of the magazine. The issue of January 26, with its thoughtful, scholarly, and balanced responses to the Vatican's recent effort to stifle discussion of women's ordination, is an example of *Commonweal*'s important role as a forum for reasoned discourse.

Obviously all this leads to a "but." The back-cover nonadvertisement in the issue of February 9 represents a lapse in taste unworthy of *Commonweal*'s long history of resistance to such "cheap shots." I fully appreciate its humor but if such material belongs in the publication at all it would be in a witty piece of satire inside. I hope this will be an isolated instance.

ELIZABETH McCARTHY DALY
DeWitt, N.Y.

It's all in the genes

Oblivious to the marginal warnings, I plunged into the text of your marvelous spoof and got half-way through it (thinking, "Maybe I should give this a try") before a something-is-wrong-here bell began to tinkle in the back of my head. My first doubt had to do with the unchristian contempt being heaped on liberal Catholics. But finally the nickel dropped: It was that conservatives, especially religious conservatives, just aren't capable of such breeziness and whimsy

This is a joke

Do Catholics have bad breath?

This is not an advertisement

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NEW OSTRICH REVIEW

("we...know that we don't have all the answers. Isn't that what a papacy is for?"). As I read on, pondering this incongruity—I suspect that conservatism and humorlessness may be gene-linked—the satire finally became so outrageous as to overwhelm my gullibility. Kudos to the author. It was so good that I suspect divine inspiration.

DENNIS MURPHY
Yakima, Wash.

Do it again

Please sign me up for a two-century subscription to *New Ostrich Review*. That was a delightful spoof. Now do one on *Nuns for Handguns*.

T.M. CURRAN
Auburn, Ala.

Seinfeld's secret

Columnist Frank McConnell explores [February 9] why "Seinfeld" is the funniest show on TV but never quite puts his finger on it. Allow me to clear it up.

Most situation comedies on TV today are not sitcoms at all. Instead, they are setting/gag comedies, or "setgags," to coin a term. This type of show puts a group of characters in a setting—a living room, a bar, etc., then has them deliver one gag line or *double entendre* after another.

The problem with this structure is that the gag lines are only occasionally funny. And thus we watch glum-faced, while being fed an annoying laugh track. "Seinfeld," on the other hand, is a true sitcom: an everyday situation develops that creates a conflict requiring a resolution. The characters then devise and act on a resolution plan that not only doesn't work but produces the opposite of what they intended.

The humor is primarily generated from irony. Irony and extraordinary characters (McConnell got this right) make "Seinfeld" the funniest show on TV. Unfortunately, these ingredients are missing from most other sitcoms, or setgags to be exact.

DICK SANDERS
Joshua Tree, Calif.

Reason for silence

Richard Gaillardetz writes helpfully about "Proclaiming the Catholic Faith" [February 9], but he seems unduly harsh in judging the silence of ministers despite their years of experience. He admits that "legitimate dissent may be a manifestation of the Spirit bringing the whole church to truth." Given that possibility, the silence of the minister about contraception may be the result of something other than "latent paternalism" or "poor theological preparation." It is the minister, after all, who feels most keenly "the polarized ecclesiastical climate of today." Rather than contribute to further polarization and/or confusion, a minister in a parish may best serve the truth by keeping silent.

JOHN F. FAHEY
Moraga, Calif.

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Bully in the pulpit

Patrick Buchanan's triumph over Republican front-runner Senator Robert Dole in last month's New Hamsphire presidential primary threatens to turn the nominating process into a long and bitter struggle between the GOP's populist and mainstream factions. As of this writing, Dole has yet to articulate the case for his own candidacy. Meanwhile Buchanan, the once-and-future media pundit, has reminded the political world that an ability to communicate a sense of yourself and your convictions may still be worth more than money or clout when it comes to presidential politics.

To say that Buchanan is a throwback is to belabor the obvious. His fiery populism, with its attack on Wall Street, foreign trade, the UN, and other real or imagined international elites hearkens back to what has rightly been called the "paranoid" style in American politics. In the 1890s William Jennings Bryan preached against big business and for the unlimited coinage of silver in the name of populism. In a markedly more demagogic fashion, Father Charles Coughlin denounced "international bankers" and Jewish power in the late 1930s. Conspiracy theories as explanations for misfortune and injustice can usually win a following in hard times. But the true sources of American prosperity and hope for the expansion of economic and social justice lie elsewhere.

Much has been made of the conservative Republican Buchanan embracing protectionism and working-class complaints about inequality. Interestingly, Buchanan's willingness to erect trade barriers to protect American workers from low-wage foreign competition is a view shared, in part, by some respected economists on the left. Free trade has become an almost unchallengeable dogma among academic economists and for most Republican and Democratic policy makers. For that reason alone it deserves a broader critique, especially when it places free trade above reciprocal labor, environmental, and fair-trade standards.

Still, the real problem of stagnant wages and mass layoffs has more to do with the short-term profit-maximizing strategies of American corporations than with foreign competition. As the A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s President John J. Sweeney said after the New Hampshire primary, Buchanan's bid for the working-class vote is a charade. The former speechwriter for Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan has a long record of hostility to the aspirations of workers. He has opposed the minimum wage, worked to weaken occupational safety regulations as well as unions generally, and endorsed Republican policies that for the last fifteen years have transferred income from the middle class to the rich.

Nevertheless, it has been Buchanan's shrewd rhetorical attention to the economic insecurity of the middle and working classes that has catapulted him to the center of the Republican race. Dole's admission that he had not understood the depths of that insecurity was astonishing. How American society might better adjust to the new global, information-based economy was the central theme of Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign, as well as House Speaker Newt Gingrich's futurist vision. Yet the Republican establishment has once again revealed itself to be—remember George Bush at the supermarket check-out line—out of touch with the economic hardships experienced by ordinary Americans.

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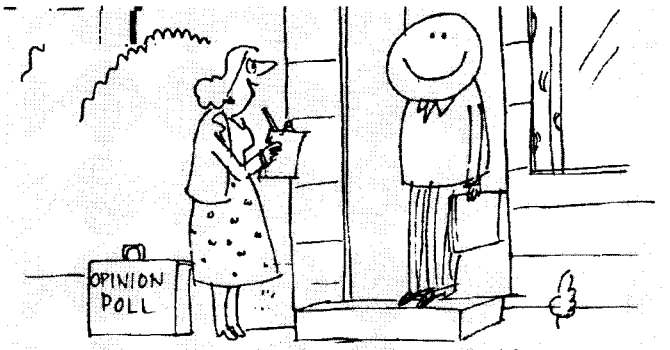

"It's unusual to find someone who likes the mainstream political candidates"

As a consequence, the social and class antagonisms Republicans have cynically exploited since Nixon's presidency now promise to tear the party apart.

Buchanan's protectionist instincts are hard to tease out from an uglier nativism that is harder still to separate from the columnist's history of glib and offensive racial and ethnic remarks. His railing against illegal immigration is cynical and manipulative. Controlling illegal immigration and regulating legal immigration are legitimate concerns. But Buchanan's threats to build a wall across the Mexican-American border isn't a solution. It's a provocation designed to exacerbate social and ethnic divisions. Coming from a self-advertised Irish-Catholic whose ancestors met bitter resistance here themselves, such fulminations are shameful.

Finally, there is another way in which Buchanan is a throwback, one which many Catholics will recognize. Buchanan is unapologetic, if not belligerent, about his faith. His opposition to abortion, a significant factor in his popularity with Republican primary voters, is steadfast and brooks no compromise. He is right about abortion as a moral issue and should be complimented on his steadfastness. But his righteous intolerance of all other views and disdain for political compromise are wrong and self-defeating. Voters say they are drawn to Buchanan because "you know where he stands." Yes, indeed, you do. Buchanan, who boasts of his strict as well as rough-and-tumble Catholic upbringing, speaks in the cadences of "the church militant." When it comes to moral certitude, the only note he seems able to hit is triumphalistic. These intellectual habits can lead to tragic mistakes. Given the right (or is it the wrong?) circumstances, what seems like moral clarity turns into mere rigidity; what looks like honesty and an admirable loyalty easily lends itself to an authoritarian use of power. In short, too many of Buchanan's instincts are an obstacle to persuasive moral reasoning and a danger to democratic governance. We trust that his prominence in the Republican party will be short-lived.

ET CETERA

Ressourcement ■ This venerable magazine has been called "Commonwealth" and "Common Wheel," so it is always reassuring to come across our name in a venerable context. Herewith a recent citing: "The arrival of the two new visitors, and the consequent check upon Mr. Winkle and the young lady with the fur round her boots, would in all probability have proved a very unpleasant interruption to the hilarity of the party, had not the cheerfulness of Mr. Pickwick, and the good humour of the host, been exerted to the very utmost for the common weal."

And indeed the common weal prevailed: "Mr. Winkle gradually insinuated himself into the good graces of Mr. Benjamin Allen, and even joined in a friendly conversation with Mr. Bob Sawyer; who, enlivened with the brandy, and the breakfast, and the talking, gradually ripened into a state of extreme facetiousness, and related with much glee an agreeable anecdote, about the removal of a tumour on some gentleman's head: which he illustrated by means of the oyster-knife and a half-quarter loaf, to the great edification of the assembled company." *Charles Dickens, Chapter XXX, Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club.*

R.I.P ■ J. M. Cameron (1910–95) will be remembered by readers of this journal as *Commonweal*'s English correspondent during the turbulent 1960s, and as an occasional but commanding contributor thereafter. In his later years he wrote often for the *New York Review of Books*. His knowledge of Christian theology and culture were richly historical, his style urbane. He was particularly well-versed at sorting out the complexities of sexuality and morality. In fact, his first piece for *Commonweal* was a 1963 report on the Profumo Affair, and his last a 1989 review of two books on sexuality in America.

Cameron displayed a keen wit tempered by well-wrought Christian tact, both in his writing and his teaching on both sides of the Atlantic. He was capable of generous appreciation—he admired the American people—but invariably maintained a prudent objectivity. Thus, he was an early foe of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, writing in *Commonweal* in June 1965: "I do not believe that the occasion, the purposes, and the methods of the war...can in any way be said to comply with the stringent conditions...for a just war."

A full-throated opponent of those preparing to fight nuclear war—and of those who supported them with moral argument—he scored Michael Novak and the school of "threatened-response" deterrence in his *Nuclear Catholics and Other Essays* (Eerdmans, 1989).

Cameron was a worthy disciple of Newman, devoted to both the practice of virtue and the cultivation of the mind. He explained that the liberal education envisioned by Newman would be plainly discernible in the educated person's disposition and comportment, that "a certain grace and polish, and flexibility of mind" would shine forth. Cameron shared the conviction of Ian Ker, one of Newman's biographers, that the central tension in Newman's life and thought had been between his conservatism and his liberalism. Both felt that Newman had displayed a rare balance that included "deference to tradition and an openness to new developments." Thus, Cameron, a supporter of Vatican II, would roundly criticize Evelyn Waugh for defending the dying

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Catholicism of the Counter-Reformation. Waugh's mistake, Cameron wrote, "was to tie the august and mysterious to the local and the transient features of that dying culture which, as a satirical novelist, he anatomized with such brilliance." But at the same time, Cameron, like Waugh, decried the coarsening of Western culture and the seepage of that culture into the precincts of the sacred. Writing in 1980 of a recent ICEL translation of the liturgical texts and of the New American Bible version of the Scriptures, Cameron observed that "the trivial and jargon-ridden pop culture in which we live is reflected in the poverty of such translations."

Cameron's final appraisal of Waugh in these pages appeared in April 1966: "He was a passionate and remarkable man, and a novelist of classic achievement. May he rest in peace." Now Cameron is gone himself. We are vastly richer for the passionate concerns and the gentlemanly comportment of his life. But we are surely the poorer for his passing. May he rest in peace.

OF SEVERAL MINDS

SIDNEY CALLAHAN

THE NUPTIAL BODY

One metaphor among many

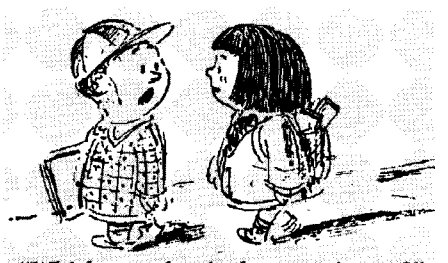
What, pray tell, is a "nuptial body"? I only come across the phrase in the writing of churchmen who resist women's ordination. Skepticism makes me wonder whether this kind of talk is only a last-ditch effort to maintain the *status quo* by maximizing and mystifying gender differences. On the other hand, perhaps these thinkers are onto something that I'm missing.

In a recent *Commonweal* essay against women's ordination [January 26], Michael Novak writes that the church teaches that "our bodies are nuptial, made for the union of male and female. It is in their nuptial union especially that the full image of God is shown forth."

Oh really? Must we now follow the biblical command and go into the ark two-by-two in order to more fully image God? If nuptially coupled bodies are the best example of the "gender-alive dimension of our faith," will Michael row the boat ashore and require that only married priests serve at the altar? Not likely.

More troubling reflections can be found in Francis Martin's scholarly *The Feminist Question* (Eerdmans, 1994). For Martin, gendered "nuptial bodies" are sacramental symbols of persons. Gender identity is so central and important that only males can hold priestly office in the church. Why? Because Martin unquestioningly assumes that masculine is active and feminine is receptive. While both sexes can be active and receptive, only males can symbolize Christ's activity within the church. Males can also imitate Christ's receptivity in the Trinity and in his acceptance of death. But females, who are basically receptive, cannot be priests because they must be active in a distinctly feminine way.

The argument gets more than a bit convoluted and confused, but the bedrock claim is "that there are two utterly distinct and original ways of being a human person. This very bisexuality bespeaks the necessity of being mutual gift to each other." Thinkers in this school, including the present pope, assert that gender differences are intended and created by God for important reasons and that only by maintaining these equal but different modes can the church affirm the sacramentality of all bodies and the goodness of human sexuality. (Or at least procreative heterosexuality. The beauty of the nuptial body business for conservatives is that it can be used to invalidate homosexual unions as well as women priests.)



"Which one of us is the opposite sex?"

Well, who among us, married laypersons or not, doesn't want to affirm the goodness of heterosexuality? Certainly many in the church have struggled long and hard to get the Vatican to accept non-abortificient contraception, just because they believe mutual sexual giving is so important for marital unity. But moving right along to the crux of the question, who would not affirm the critical importance of embodiment and sacramentality in our Catholic faith? Feminist theologians also want to be sure that feminine bodies don't get dismissed or ignored. They take women's physical embodiment seriously and stress interpersonal relations. These tenets are especially needed in a church that in the past has suffered from misogynist claims of women's sexual inferiority, usually because of those weak, impure, bleeding, birthing, generally unclean bodies inherited from Eve.

But to correct past gender disparagements and dualistic gnostic hatreds of embodied flesh, we should not lurch to the opposite error. In the end, when we extol gender differences as divinely sanctioned and distinctly different ways of being a human person, we narrow, over-sexualize, and seriously distort the gospel's good news. How so?

First, the ideal of a gendered "nuptial body" ignores our current understandings of the way actual human bodies develop and have evolved in our evolutionary past. Human sexual, gendered, and personal identities emerge in incredibly complex and *varied* genetic, gonadal, hormonal, psychosocial, and cognitive interactions. Think of the appearance of genetic anomalies, hermaphrodites, or the development of homosexualities. Think of the testimony of scientists and ordinary persons who do not find that in

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their experience human nature comes in two distinct forms. A rigidly proclaimed normative dichotomous ideal of what "ought" to be the case can hardly ignore or simply dismiss scientific perspectives or common social experience.

In my own limited life experience—forty years married and having borne and reared five grown sons and a daughter—the idea of a nuptial body and complementarity makes little sense. True, family life is a collective experience of mutual giving, but differences in age, health, individual personalities, and character become far more important than distinctive gender differences.

Exaggerated, overblown interpretations of the importance of gender differences and nuptial bodily orientations might make sense if Catholicism were a pagan fertility cult in which a divine couple created the world by sexual intercourse. But in Christianity, God creates by the Word, Mary cooperates by *fiat*, and Christ obeys God's will. We disciples enter into the corporate body of Christ by faith, hope, and charity. The basic sacramental action is to eat a ritual sacred meal together as a corporate body, and thereby become transformed into Christ as a new creation.

Why single out and privilege bodily imagery that refers to adult sexual unions? Yes, in Scripture Christ is referred to as bridegroom, but also by a host of other images: vine, light, mother hen, lamb of God, physician. Christ's embodiment is shown forth by feeding, footwashing, healing, and releasing human beings from disease, blindness, bondage, and death. In Scripture, nuptial imagery is but one good symbol of our embodied human experiences. Is not this truly reflective of actual human embodiment which is a complex dynamic process of development? What *makes* a human body a body? Mind, body, brain, spirit, species relationships are still too little understood to confidently extol one narrow definition or one symbol of embodiment.

To overemphasize the nuptial, adult male-female relationship scants the corporate unity and relationships of individuals with both the human species, the rest of social and physical creation, and with the whole body of the church. Human beings can only exist as members of a species: indeed, we have all been wounded and been redeemed together in Christ. Hence, as embodied beings in time, we are oriented to and interact with many diverse persons and collectivities. Male-female identities are only one good but limited theme running through the oratorio of life.

Even in the arias and wonderful duets within a marriage—and especially in a long, long marriage—gender becomes trumped by a multitude of other embodied dimensions and relationships. Each dance through life produces a plenitude of incredibly intricate interweaving patterns and steps. There is more to dancing than having two to tango. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

JOHN GARVEY

IT'S ONE UNIVERSE

Where the godly & godless can talk

The place of religion and religious discourse in a secular society is a subject of constant debate. At one extreme are those who believe that the wall between church and state is infinitely high, that religion is appropriately considered a subjective matter of personal taste—something done privately, between consenting adults—and that it should never intrude upon the public realm. Their opposite numbers are those who would see the law reflect specifically religious concerns, including the institution of prayer in public schools and the teaching of creationism instead of, or at least alongside of, evolution.

Somewhere in between, and much more compelling, are such writers as Stephen Carter and George Marsden, who, while remaining sensitive to the separation of church and state, believe that religion has been marginalized, that it can and should be part of our public discourse.

A particularly interesting recent issue of *First Things* (February 1996) addresses this question in more depth than is usual. Duke University Professor Stanley Fish (author of *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change*, Oxford) argues against Carter and Marsden that the religious and liberal, secular realms are so completely different in their first assumptions that dialogue is impossible; *First Things* editor Richard John Neuhaus argues that dialogue is not only possible, but for believers is an imperative grounded in faith. According to Fish, "If you persuade liberalism that its dismissive marginalizing of religious discourse is a violation of its own chief principle, all you will gain is the right to sit down at *liberalism's* table where before you were denied an invitation; but it will still be liberalism's table that you are sitting at, and the etiquette of the conversation will be hers....To put the matter baldly, a person of religious conviction should not want to enter the marketplace of ideas but to shut it down, at least insofar as it presumes to determine matters that he believes have been determined by God and faith. The religious person should not seek an accommodation with liberalism; he should seek to rout it from the field, root and branch."

The idea of tolerance is alien to genuine religion, Fish argues, and the religious and secular person are arguing from premises so radically different that they inhabit separate universes. For example: "A prolife advocate sees abortion as a sin against God who infuses life at the moment of conception; a prochoice advocate sees abortion as a decision to be made in accordance with the best scientific opinion as to when the beginning of life, as we know it, occurs. No conver-

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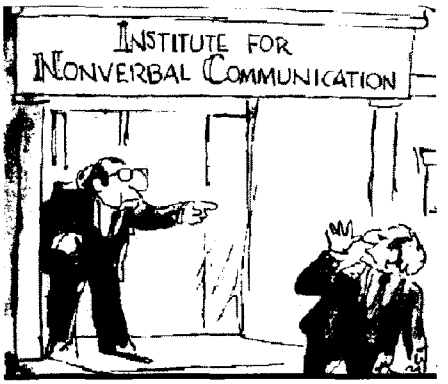
sation between them can ever get started because each of them starts from a different place and they could never agree as to what they were conversing *about*."

I have to admit that I have been tempted to something like this opinion, particularly where debates over abortion are concerned, but it is, finally, wrongheaded, and Neuhaus answers Fish persuasively. He rejects the "currently fashionable notion that people live in, as it is said, realities created by incommensurable traditions of discourse. Incommensurable means that there can be no accurate translation from one discourse into the other." Neuhaus points out that people who are "committed to opposing major premises are not thereby operating by opposing systems of logic." He responds to Fish's claim that religious intellectuals must finally want the marketplace of ideas to be shut down: these intellectuals "might respond that it is their interest and their duty to transform the marketplace, but before transforming it they must gain entry, and to gain entry they must demonstrate that they understand the existing liberal rules that need to be changed....There is a level at which conflict can be replaced by conversation, and only by entering the exchange of ideas can one discover where that level



might be. There are preliminary moves appropriate to what some Christians call 'pre-evangelization.' The venerable precendent is Saint Paul in the Areopagus of Athens (Acts 17). You engage people at the point where they are engageable and then hope that they might be moved, step by step, toward the fullness of truth. It doesn't always work, of course."

It didn't work very well for Saint Paul, in fact; but Neuhaus is right. He might also have mentioned such apologists as Saint Justin, or the use of Greek philosophy by the Fathers, or of Aristotle by Thomas Aquinas. The dialogue between religious belief and the world within which it finds itself is ancient, and Fish's incommensurate realms of discourse much more recent.

One thing, finally, makes me believe that Neuhaus has it right. That is the simple phenomenon of people who at one level change their minds, and at a more dramatic level are genuinely converted. A friend of mine told me once that he had moved from being "reluctantly prochoice to being reluctantly prolife." He simply found that one set of arguments made more sense than another. Atheists become believers; Saul becomes Paul. Something in lived experience can move us from one place to another in a way that Fish's approach does not account for, and Neuhaus's does.

The argument is an important one, because there are obvious difficulties with being a believer in a culture which treats belief as a matter of personal whim. We believe in "the love that moves the sun and the other stars," to quote Dante, and the secular culture puts this on the table along with the schoolboy atheism of Carl Sagan and says it's all a matter of taste. But better this frustration than either a theocracy or the total victory of secularism. Believers are called to the demanding work of learning not only to respect but even to love those with whom we are in deep disagreement. When religion was allied to power this love was made more difficult; it may be one of secularism's gifts that it freed religion into a place where dialogue was made absolutely necessary. □

Robert A. Senser

WHO IS WEI JINGSHENG?

And why is the U. S. looking the other way?

The prison system of the People's Republic of China has achieved such "remarkable results in reforming criminals," the government claims, that very few people have to be jailed a second time. By that measure, Wei Jingsheng, a former electrician, is one of the system's most dismal failures. From a boy forced to memorize a page of Mao Zedong's thought each day, he grew up to become China's most renowned voice for human rights and democracy. Even fourteen-and-a-half years in gulag-like prisons failed to reeducate him, and so now he is back a second time.

Wei's first prison term started in 1979 when he was twenty-nine. His crimes then, as the leading activist in the short-lived Democracy Wall movement in Beijing, included editing a mimeographed bulletin and writing wall posters that attacked the icons of Chinese communism, including one-party rule. After Deng Xiaoping publicly warned the activists to toe the line of "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought," Wei wrote an editorial daring to suggest that Deng was becoming a "new dictator." Arrested a few days later, Wei was quickly convicted for violating Mao's 1952 Regulations on the Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries.

Wei emerged from prison in September 1993, having lost his teeth but not his determination. For six months, despite constant surveillance, despite repeated warnings from police, he acted almost as though he lived in a free country. In interviews and in his own articles published abroad, he advocated policies deviating from the Communist party line, for example, by calling for the release of thousands of political prisoners and even supporting the independence of Tibet. He helped poverty-stricken dissidents with money awarded from his international prizes. He talked with rep-

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resentatives of the U.S. government and international human rights groups. Such activities, none violent and none advocating violence, became the basis for arresting him, holding him incommunicado for twenty months, and then in December sentencing him to fourteen years in prison for "slandering the socialist system" and "plotting to overthrow the people's democratic dictatorship."

Beijing could live with the strong international criticism that followed, even while complaining against it, because the massive infusion of trade, aid, loans, investment, and technology into the People's Republic was continuing unabated. Bonn, concluding a package of business deals with Beijing, suggested that Wei be released for exile in Germany. Wei, however, has made it clear that he does not want to leave China. The Chinese government might nevertheless force him into exile in return for some international concession, such as favorable terms for China's entry into the World Trade Organization. But it would be an outrage for Germany, or any other country, to collaborate in a deal that reduces Wei Jingsheng to a bargaining chip.

The glaring spotlight on Wei leaves in the shadows many others in China who share his fate because they share the same commitment to freedom. Among them are countless worker activists condemned to two-to-twenty years in prison for trying to organize independent groups (such as one called the League for the Protection of the Rights of Working People) or for sending prodemocracy petitions to the government or for publishing bulletins informing workers of their rights under China's own constitution. The current issue of *China Rights Forum*, published in New York, lists twenty-three such activists, who the magazine says represent only "a small fraction" of those languishing unjustly in prison. It is routine for their relatives and associates also to be punished through loss of jobs, confiscation of bank accounts, harassment by neighborhood committees of the Communist party, dismissal from school, surveillance by security police, and other reprisals. Wei's own secretary and interpreter, Tong Yi, twenty-seven, was condemned to two-and-a-half years in a labor camp known for exporting products abroad. According to a letter smuggled out to Human Rights/Asia, she has been severely beaten for objecting to being forced to work twelve-hours-a-day making textile products.

Hence, far more is at stake than Wei's fate alone. The citizens of Hong Kong understand that well. The banners of demonstrators in a pre-New Year march through Hong Kong streets had it right: "Today Wei Jingsheng, tomorrow you and me!" and "Fighting for democracy is no crime." The 6 million Chinese in Hong Kong include many—journalists, lawyers, union leaders, doctors, teachers, workers, business people, and others—who have already put their necks on the line in legislative council elections and other public activities seeking the survival of freedom after Beijing absorbs the colony in July 1997.

What ought democratic governments do? Anxious to show that Wei, locked up in solitary confinement, has not been forgotten, the U.S. Congress and the British Parliament have nominated him for the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize. Pressure is also building on the upcoming session of the UN Human Rights Commission to pass a strong resolution criticizing China. Such actions, however, do not fulfill the urgent need for a concerted China policy not inspired by commerce alone. But the U.S. government, which ought to take the lead, as it did over Bosnia, is encumbered by the extensive American entanglement with the Beijing regime.

Harry Wu, during his sixty-six days of incarceration in China last year, saw first-hand how far that involvement reaches, specifically in equipping China's party-state apparatus, the largest bureaucracy in the history of the world, and still expanding. "All the plainclothes security people [who seized and guarded him] carried Motorola cellular phones," Wu told a congressional hearing in September. "That American products are helping make China's repressive machine more efficient should be a moral concern to every thinking American." Should be, but is not.

Some members of Congress this year will probably again try to deny China what it never should have been granted, the status of a "Most Favored Nation," from which the regime gains so many benefits. But, barring some major blunder by Beijing such as a military attack on Taiwan, continued renewal of MFN for China seems assured, because U.S. business interests share richly in those benefits. The energy wasted on another losing anti-MFN campaign should be devoted to devising and implementing a strategy with a greater chance of winning bipartisan and business support.

Consider, for example: the People's Republic ranks third from the top among nations in the volume of UN-sponsored development aid it receives, and its $23 billion in low-interest loan commitments from the World Bank make China the Bank's heaviest borrower. As the *Wall Street Journal* has correctly pointed out, "these [international] resources are funneled through China's central government, strengthening its purse and its power over Chinese citizens' lives." Not only that. China is so flush with foreign funds that it can now divert some to shore up the power of kindred governments. In December, Beijing's newly established Export-Import Bank, as its first project, granted $12 million in preferential loans to Sudan's military government. As its second project, it ceremoniously signed a $520 million contract to overhaul Nigeria's railway system and provide it with new locomotives. On the day when the People's Court sentenced Wei, Lagos thanked China for helping Nigeria reach "the threshold of an economic revolution," presumably to parallel the bloody political revolution by a military dictatorship that in November hanged nine human-rights activists.

Policy debates about China usually revolve around the wisdom of applying punitive sanctions. But the key issue is not whether China should be punished, but whether it merits being so munificently rewarded. □

Robert A. Senser *writes frequently for this and other publications on human-rights issues.*

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HOW CATHOLIC IS THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE?

You'd be surprised

Philip Gleason

What has come to be called the American Catholic Revival of the 1920s can be closely linked to the experience of U.S. Catholics in World War I. Crucial to this new spirit was the creation of the National Catholic War Council, which became in 1919 the National Catholic Welfare Council (and still later the National Catholic Welfare *Conference*). A national headquarters and a staff, located in Washington, D.C., not only gave the church a more effective voice in public affairs, it also enhanced Catholic visibility, serving notice that a new era of purposeful Catholic participation in American life was about to begin. These developments had a tonic effect on Catholic morale and, following the shared experience of wartime mobilization, reinforced the sense of emotional solidarity with, and responsibility for, the nation.

The earliest manifestations of the Catholic Revival took the form of a new kind of Catholic Americanism, one drawing on new intellectual resources. The most important of these was neoscholastic social and political theory. Neoscholasticism came into prominence through what was then called "the social question" and the work of Monsignor John A. Ryan, the outstanding exponent and popularizer of "papal social teaching," which Leo XIII had laid out on the basis of Thomistic natural-law principles. Ryan's progressivism constituted a positive point of contact between the neoscholastic tradition and the reform impulse that coursed so strongly through American society in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC), in which Ryan played a leading role, gave him an official platform underlining the links between progressive Americanism and neoscholastic Catholicism.

A much more obvious link with Americanism, especially in the context of World War I, was the claim that the roots of democracy and constitutionalism were to be found in medieval scholasticism, an argument that became a distinguishing feature of Catholic Americanism in the 1920s.

The compatibility of American and Catholic principles had, of course, been affirmed since the days of John Carroll, the first American bishop. Orestes Brownson and Isaac Hecker, among others, had gone beyond simple affirmation by offering reasonable arguments to support the claim of compatibility. What was new in the era of World War I was an emphasis on the virtual identity of Scholastic and American political principles. The first landmark in this line of interpretation was Gaillard Hunt's "The Virginia Declaration of Rights and Cardinal Bellarmine" (*Catholic Historical Review*, 1917), which pointed out the similarity of language between the Declaration of Independence and certain writings of Robert Bellarmine, S.J. (a prominent figure in the Counter-Reformation revival of Thomism). The article naturally attracted attention, since the idea that Thomas Jefferson could have derived his ideas from such a source seemed startling even to Catholics and outlandish to everyone else. Although subsequently dismissed as propagating a "Bellarmine-Jefferson legend," the article itself was not extravagant in its claims, and the general line of interpretation toward which it pointed was in keeping with the best contemporary scholarship on medieval and early modern political thought.

Hunt argued that a passage from Bellarmine, which Jefferson might have read in Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*, provided a better short statement of the doctrines enunciated in the Declaration of Independence than any other work of political theory available to him. Hunt acknowledged that there was no direct evidence that Jefferson had read the passage, much less that he consciously drew upon it in formulating the rationale for colonial rejection of royal authority. But the hypothesis that he had at least read it was plausible since Filmer was a major figure in the tradition of English political thought, and Jefferson's library contained a copy of *Patriarcha*.

Hunt was a Catholic convert of patrician stock whose opinion on America's revolutionary origins counted for something since he enjoyed high repute as a scholar for his biographies of James Madison and John C. Calhoun and as the editor of Madison's writings. When Hunt wrote the Bellarmine article he was chief of the manuscript division of the Library of Congress and was engaged on the mammoth project of editing the journals of the Continental Congress. For such a man to propose a Catholic source for American republicanism—and to do so in the sixth month

Philip Gleason *is professor of history at the University of Notre Dame. This essay is excerpted from* Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in Twentieth-Century America. *Copyright © 1995 by Philip Gleason. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press.*

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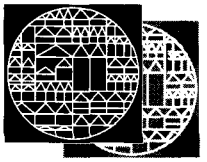

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of the nation's wartime crusade for democracy—could not but fill American Catholics with pride and make them more certain than ever that their religious and national loyalties fit harmoniously together.

Other articles soon followed, developing the same line of interpretation. The most influential did not focus exclusively on the Bellarmine-Jefferson question, but argued the broader thesis that medieval and Counter-Reformation Catholic thinkers made important contributions to the evolution of modern constitutional theory. Most of this literature was strongly polemical, and many writers no doubt overstated their case. But the broader contention—that the political philosophy of the Founding Fathers drew on the tradition of natural law and limited government to which the medieval Scholastics and Counter-Reformation Jesuits made important contributions—was clearly warranted by the best contemporary scholarship.

In his *History of Freedom in Christianity*, first published in 1907, Lord Acton quoted Thomas Aquinas on the need to ground political authority in popular consent, on the right of the people to overthrow an unjust ruler, and on several other points of like import, and then observed: "This language...contains the earliest exposition of the Whig theory of the revolution...." The same year, John Neville Figgis acknowledged that "the original sovereignty of the people" was a "cardinal doctrine of the Jesuit thinkers," and was more heavily emphasized by them "than by Protestant controversialists" of the Counter-Reformation era. In 1918, Charles H. McIlwain of Harvard took note of the extent to which the English Protestant dissenters silently made use of Jesuit arguments in their contest with the Stuart kings of England. Not long thereafter, Ernest Barker went even further:

"Saint Thomas—like the clerical thinkers of the Middle Ages in general—is a Whig; he believes in popular sovereignty, popular institution of monarchy, a pact between king and people, and the general tenets of Locke. It was not idly that Sir Robert Filmer wrote that 'this tenent [*sic*] was first hatched in the schools [i.e., by medieval Scholastics], and has been fostered by all succeeding papists for good divinity."

The American Catholic writer who made this line of interpretation his specialty was Moorhouse F. X. Millar, S.J., a convert of Scottish and old American background. Millar began to write on these matters during the war years. He served as chairman of the graduate department of political philosophy and social science at Fordham between 1929 and 1953. Among Millar's strongest statements of the continuity between medieval and early modern Catholic political principles and those of the American republic were three chapters he contributed to *The State and the Church* (1922), a volume that he coauthored with John A. Ryan for the social action department of the NCWC. In 1928, when the Al Smith campaign made Catholic civic loyalty a burning issue, Millar brought out a collection of his earlier articles denying that the nation owed its liberty to Protestantism, and elaborating in-

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stead the linkages between the American system and the political traditions of the Catholic Middle Ages. Although he was better known for his neoscholastic socioeconomic commentary, Ryan also expounded the medieval-roots-of-democracy thesis in dealing with the issue of Wilsonian self-determination in the winter of 1918–19 and of Catholic civic loyalty in 1928.

The medieval lineage of democracy was so well established among educated American Catholics that in 1926 Michael Williams, the editor of *Commonweal*, cited Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., editor of *America*, as the authority for asserting "that it is from Saint Thomas Aquinas and the political theories of the Catholic Middle Ages that the American political tradition derives. The founders of the republic took their political thought from the English Whigs of the eighteenth century, who themselves took it directly from the writings of the Jesuit theologians, Suarez and Ballarmine [*sic*], who took it from Saint Thomas—and the thought of Saint Thomas has been sealed with the approval of the church."

A year later Williams had the pleasure of printing a short piece (*Commonweal*, April 13, 1927) in which Walter Lippmann indicated his general acceptance of this interpretation.

The rediscovery of medieval sources for democracy reinforced the pre-existing Catholic enthusiasm for the Middle Ages to which James J. Walsh's *The Thirteenth, Greatest of Centuries* gave witness. Published in 1907 (Catholic Summer School Press), this glowing survey of the achievements of the high Middle Ages had gone through eight editions by 1924. In the eighth edition Walsh was able to include a passage from Henry Adams's *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (1913) among the other statements by non-Catholic authorities buttressing his contention that the thirteenth century really did represent the high point of Western civilization. Against this background, it is understandable that American Catholics sometimes linked the point about the harmony of their religious and political commitments to broader claims about historical continuity between the Middle Ages and the present day. No one put the claim in bolder terms than the highly respected Columbia University historian, Carlton J. H. Hayes, a convert active in the Catholic lay movement of the 1920s and a regular *Commonweal* contributor. To meet their "Obligations to America," Hayes informed his coreligionists, they must "grasp the significant truth that America is the daughter of the Catholic church. Not only was this continent discovered and opened to the whole world by Catholics, but our country could not possibly be what it is now had it not been for Catholic Christianity." As "an idea, a type of culture," Catholicism had shaped the whole of Western civilization so deeply that every institution and ideal of true Americanism had its "embryo and antetype...in Catholic theory and practice." Thus the democratic institutions of early New England were rooted in "an older tradition of democratic guilds, democratic communes, institutions of representative government, trials by juries of one's peers, and Magna Chartas—an older tradition, the whole of which was inextricably interwoven

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with the life and spirit of mediaeval, Catholic Europe."

Longtime *Commonweal* managing editor George N. Shuster, who wrote the most sophisticated and irenic work of apologetics called forth by the anti-Catholicism of the 1920s, emphasized the "Catholic spirit" as the mediating ground between Catholicity and Americanism. By temperament, Shuster was less interested in political theory than in art and literature, and his "Catholic spirit" was redolent of both medievalism and romanticism; but he also drew attention to the pioneering role of colonial Maryland in providing for religious toleration. And while he rejected the thesis that the Founding Fathers had been directly influenced by Cardinal Bellarmine, he nevertheless insisted "that the United States government as it came into being corresponds admirably with what the great sixteenth-century Jesuit theologian outlined as sound Catholic doctrine."

Jerry Harp

At the Archabbey

Stone crosses among pine trees
stand in rain.
A crow calls

from a wooden shed
and grabs the vagrant air
with raging wings.

The iron gate creaks.
Even now, years later
(and I don't know if the old monk

is still alive), I wonder
how he lived
so empty an existence,

and long to find
myself in the midst
of such blessing.

For many Catholics today, claims of this sort are embarrassing specimens of triumphalism—or perhaps evidence of something worse: capitulation to American nationalism. While understandable, such reactions fall far short of an adequate appreciation of the situation as it then existed. To do justice to that situation, we must remember several points, the first of which is that there was genuine merit to the argument that Scholastic political principles formed an important element in the "higher law" background of American constitutional thought. Catholics naturally felt that this dimension of the American heritage deserved recognition, and they were hurt and offended by its being dismissed as "legendary."

Second, affirming the congruence of Catholic natural-law theory with the basic principles of the national polity was not the same as accepting superpatriotic "Americanism" in an uncritical way. On the contrary, it enabled Catholics to counterpose their own interpretation of the national tradition against others with which they disagreed. This is precisely what they did from the 1920s, when disagreement focused on the extension of federal power over education and family matters, to the 1950s, when John Courtney Murray, S.J., marshaled natural-law arguments in favor of public support for Catholic parochial schools.

Third, it is important to keep in mind the timing of this historical recovery of the Scholastic-roots-of-democracy theory. The theory was broached in the midst of a great war in which Catholics were swept up in the prevailing patriotic fervor, and it was popularized while the nation was being shaken by the most powerful eruption of anti-Catholic feeling since the Know-Nothing movement of the 1850s. Moreover, the Ku Klux Klan, which portrayed itself as the last bulwark of true Americanism, denied precisely what was at issue in the theory—the credibility of Catholics' claims to be devoted to American principles.

It is also of interest, though no doubt merely coincidental, that a Klan stronghold like Indiana seems to have been the only state to witness a violent confrontation between Catholic collegians and members of the Klan. The episode was precipitated when students from Notre Dame broke up a regional KKK rally and parade in South Bend on May 17, 1924. Two days later, violence flared briefly a second time as the students marched on the local Klan headquarters in response to rumors that one of their number was being mistreated there. An emotional appeal by Notre Dame president Matthew J. Walsh, C.S.C., persuaded the students to return to campus before the second episode of violence got completely out of hand.

The intensity of anti-Catholic feeling embodied in the Ku Klux Klan, along with widespread questioning in more genteel circles of Catholics' commitment to American principles, constitute the background against which we must situate both the emergence of the theory and the extravagant claims its popularization encouraged about "the blessed harmony" that always had and always would exist "between the spirit of the Catholic church and the spirit of the United States of America." □

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Richard Alleva

EMMA CAN READ, TOO

'Sense and Sensibility'

The only way to turn a classic novel into a vivid movie is to bring a lot of tough love to the project. Reverence alone won't do (as witness Visconti's paralyzed and paralyzing version of *Death in Venice*), and brisk assurance without tact produces such vulgarities as Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and Richard Brooks's *Lord Jim*. But boldness in the service of love can result in films like the Noel Langley-Alistair Sim *Christmas Carol*, Eric Rohmer's poignant rendering of Kleist's *The Marquise of O*, John Huston's great expansion of Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King*.

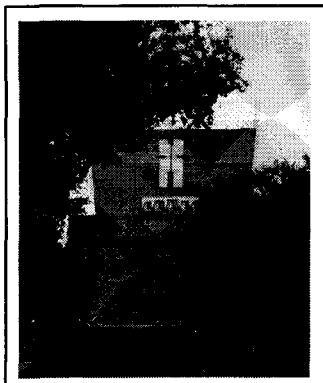
Add one more film to the honor roll. Judging by her adaptation of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, Emma Thompson is the toughest of tough lovers, the most disciplined of Janeites. Lovingly directed by Ang Lee, the movie doesn't send you scurrying back to the original to find out why Character X did this or that, or how Character Y really felt, because what's up there on screen is satisfying in itself. But if you do return to the book, you may be astonished by Thompson's expansions and curtailments. And you will certainly be struck by her complete understanding of what this novel is really about.

Sense and Sensibility is a tale of two sisters: the reserved, sensible Elinor, who finds Mr. Right apparently too late; and the romantic Marianne, who finds a Mr. Right who turns out to be Mr. Wrong. It's a good novel, but I wonder if it would enjoy classic status if Jane Austen hadn't written anything else. Just as *Barnaby Rudge* has ridden to immortality on the coattails of *Pickwick Papers* and *Bleak House*, *S&S* has survived the depredations of time mainly because it is boxed, in complete sets of Jane Austen, with the true masterpieces, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Persuasion*, and *Emma*. Its plot is serviceable yet seems a little overloaded with breathless messengers riding posthaste on frothing steeds. The two protagonists are poignantly drawn and some of the supporting players are richly comic. But the faithful lovers of the sisters, Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon, are two sticks walking about in frock coats. (On the other hand, Willoughby, the cad who betrays Marianne, is alive precisely because he *is* a cad, and the author, casting a cold eye on him, sees him clearly and from more than one angle.) And there are too many minor characters whom we cannot really see in our minds' eyes as they perform what are purely functional roles.

Yet *Sense and Sensibility* has something no other Jane Austen novel—with the exception of *Persuasion*—has: naked emotion. We smile at Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy, we laugh at Emma Woodhouse, we are disturbed by the sexual predators of *Mansfield Park*, but when Marianne runs across a ballroom to the man she is obsessed by, and who is ignoring her, and exclaims "Good God! Willoughby, what is the meaning of this?" only to be met by cold looks and even colder words, we may feel tears coming to our eyes and the hairs on our forearms rising. *Sense and Sensibility* is a very direct book.

How well Emma Thompson and Ang Lee have understood this and how cleanly they have cut to the core of Austen's comedy and drama! Thompson doesn't hesitate to turn the book's happily married Sir John Middleton into a widower because she understands that Sir John's comicality registers most vividly when he appears in tandem not with his starchy wife but with his mother-in-law, Mrs. Jennings, the great supergossip of English literature. As written by Thompson and as played, to the hilt, by Robert Hardy and Elizabeth Sprigg, the two good-hearted meddlers become a great comic team.

But that is a masterstroke of excision. As an example of creative enlargement, look at what the scriptwriter has done with Edward Ferrars. In the book, Elinor's choice of such a dull man as her life's companion diminishes her. But Thompson makes it clear from the start that what Elinor cherishes in Edward is not his self-effacement but his generosity and the tact by which that generosity enacts itself. When the film's Edward finds that his visit to the Dashwood house has deprived the youngest sister, eleven-year-old Margaret, of her bedroom, he tacitly claims a less agreeable guest chamber. When the child hides herself from all visitors, Edward brings off a playful ruse that coaxes Margaret back to civilization. Although Hugh Grant's performance is the only faulty one in the movie—too much squinting and shoulder-hunching—he does render Edward's



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diffidence as pure charm and courtesy. We believe Elinor is right to love this man, and that's what counts.

But what counts most of all is that the screenwriter comprehends the theme of the novel. Like much of Austen's fiction (and much of Henry James's) *S&S* is about honor. Not the sort of honor defended in duels but the kind all men and women defer to when they *honor* their commitments. Jane Austen, *pace* George Eliot or Doris Lessing fans, remains the supreme feminist of fiction because her major female characters are always presented as moral agents, not as fortresses of virginity determining which males will be allowed to breach the gates nor as bluestockings preoccupied by the bees of idealism buzzing in their bonnets. When Elinor understands that Edward may be unable to marry her because he has already pledged himself to a Miss Steele, she not only approves of his scruples but tries to expedite the dreaded marriage because she'd rather see her lover retain his honor than be with her in dishonor. Not exactly a modern girl, this Miss Dashwood, but Thompson makes us understand that she is as chivalrous as any knight on a white charger.

Jane Austen was a genius at characterization and plotting but physical description was never her forte. That's not a defect, just a negative attribute of her special art. But this puts a burden on the director to supply the visual equivalent of the novelist's sensibility. Ang Lee triumphs. He never permits his camera to be a tourist of the English countryside but uses the settings to support the emotions of any given scene. He and cameraman Michael Coulter have drawn upon the paintings of Vermeer for certain of the quieter domestic scenes and (I think) Constable for some of the outdoor passages, but the lighting of Marianne in agony on her sickbed is pure Caravaggio, and justly so. Lee's subtle directorial touches can be relished at second, even third viewings. Let me cite only one shot: the overhead view of Elinor sitting on a landing and holding a cup of tea that nobody wants while—to Elinor's left, front, and right—every other member of the all-female household locks herself in her bedroom to howl over Willoughby's hasty departure. Elinor's heart is breaking, too—for Edward's sake. But how can a girl weep when the rest of her family holds the monopoly on grief and she is expected to be the dry-eyed pillar of common sense? So she just sits and thinks and sips the tea that nobody wants while we, perched by Lee high above the landing, gaze down on her in admiring pity, in smiling commiseration. It's a very poignant and very funny shot, and has perfect Austen pitch.

Greg Wise, as Willoughby, had the teen-aged girls four rows down from me swooning through the first half of the movie and hissing him in the second. Way to go, Greg. They then transferred their swooning to Alan Rickman as noble Colonel Brandon. Way to go, Rickman. Imogene Stubbs is amazing as the steely Miss Steele. Simultaneously laughable, smarmy, and frightening, she leans right into her rival's bosom, flutters her eyelashes, and verbally batters away at the mid-section with a relentlessness that Joe Frazier would have envied. Kate Winslet, as Marianne, is both formidable and pitiful in the coils of passion, and, in those scenes which require vocal fireworks, Winslet unleashes a voice that might do justice to Shakespeare.

To Emma Thompson's performance as Elinor I would like to raise a monument of words, but I can only toss a pebble onto the pile already heaped by fellow critics. In passages of wit, she is the driest of clarets, in scenes of grief and yearning, the most full-bodied of Burgundies. My metaphors are drawn from wine because I wish to offer a toast to the finest actress (and now, apparently, one of the best scriptwriters) currently working in the English-speaking cinema.

I regret that circumstances didn't permit me to review *Persuasion* last year. Let me just state that I think it a very good adaptation but that certain elements in it—the drizzly (and lovely) photography, the anachronistic music (Chopin, among others), the generally hushed quality of the soundtrack, and the almost self-effacing performance of Amanda Root (of, to be sure, a self-effacing heroine), nudge it a little further into the nineteenth century than the sensibility of Jane Austen belongs. Nevertheless, this movie's style does capture the tenderness and melancholy of a book written by a woman who probably sensed her impending death.

The little I saw of *Pride and Prejudice* on the Arts and Entertainment channel repelled me. Here was a cuddly Elizabeth Bennet, and how in the name of F.

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R. Leavis can a Jane Austen heroine be cuddly? Here was a Darcy who dived into cold lakes to quench his sexual appetite. Was the fellow educated in Jesuit boarding schools? Here was a camera that looked at the English countryside as if it were a National Trust guide showing yuppie Yank tourists the Stately Homes of England. ("And over here, ladies and gentlemen, the servants' quarters. Note the ruddy faces of our healthy, happy yeomen.") If the film *Persuasion* steers Austen close to Brontë country, this *Pride and Prejudice* dumped her right into the land of Regency Romance paperbacks. □

MEDIA

Frank McConnell

MUSIC TO HAVE FUN BY

Gerry Mulligan & his baritone sax

I've been trying to remember a time when Gerry Mulligan—somewhere, somehow—wasn't on my mind, and I can't think of many. Mulligan died on January 20 at the age of sixty-eight.

In 1953 I was eleven, had just discovered the saxophone and the glory of jazz, and had decided that playing *that* music was what God had made me for. (Well, turns out I was mistaken, or maybe God had been sending mixed signals—a notoriously bad habit of his.) Anyhow, there was this artsy Sunday morning TV show on CBS, "Omnibus" (its theme was from Stravinsky's *Firebird*), and this one Sunday one of its features was a live performance by the Gerry Mulligan Quartet: the *original* Quartet, drums, bass, Chet Baker on trumpet, Mulligan on baritone sax with—revolutionary for the time—no piano. I didn't catch then the title of the tune they played; but I've heard it so often in so many versions, over the years—and can still remember that first hearing so clearly—that I can tell you it was Gerry's own sinuous, swinging composition, "Line for Lyons." Bass drum (the great—I'd learn later—Chico Hamilton) laid down that nice, easy and open groove that's the heart of the heart of the music, while the trumpet and the baritone stated the leisurely theme and then improvised on it, first trumpet with baritone counterpoint, then baritone and trumpet counterpoint, and then both returning to the main theme and coming to an absolutely satisfying, quiet rest. To me, entranced, it was the sound of happiness, of a limpid intelligence—of an unassailable gaiety.

And that gaiety, for me, has remained Mulligan's great gift: the gift he had and the gift his music gave.

Okay, there were shadows, desert places: is there a truly human life *without* them? When I first saw Mulligan, he had only recently kicked his heroin habit, and the brilliant, matinee-idol Baker was descending into *his* habit, which would make his next thirty years a woozy junkie's hell. And, okay, in a Draconian cosmic reckoning, Mulligan, for all his wonderful facility as a player, wasn't one of the music's great innovators—not an Armstrong, a Parker, a Coltrane, or a Cecil Taylor. Even the jazz press at times dismissed his music as too comfortable, too pleasant a decoction of postwar modernism—as "bopsieland."

And how Draconian that is. So, you're not Picasso or Jackson Pollock, *sei gesund*; it's no big disgrace, already, to be Miro or Chagall.

The fact is that for fifty years Mulligan wrote, arranged, and played the music he obviously loved the way most folks can only love a husband or wife, and did it with a Toto-I-don't-think-we're-in-Kansas-anymore, wide-eyed passion that, itself, is almost the message of his art. And he did it with anybody who would join in: with the boppers, with

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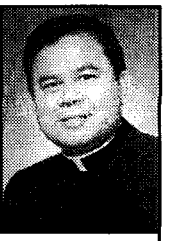

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rockabilly players, with Mel Tormé, and even with—God save the mark—Barry Manilow. Legends are rife of Mulligan, at one jazz festival or another, prowling the rehearsal tents to find somebody, anybody, who would just like to go someplace and jam. "Boyish," in the best sense, is the word: and in the best sense he died a sixty-eight-year-old boy.

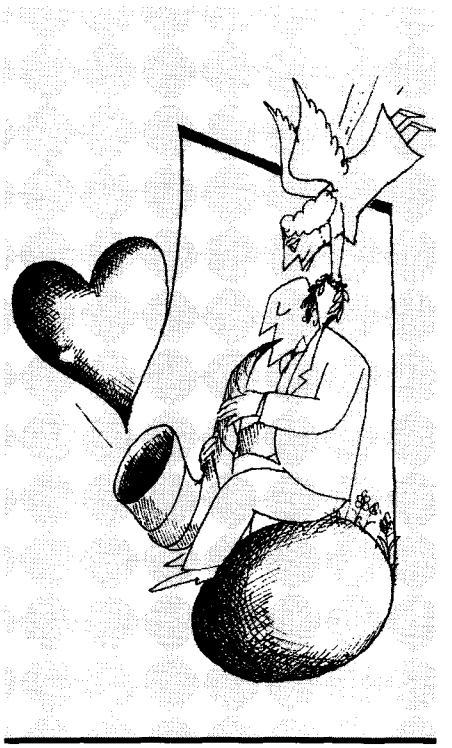
It's a hoary musician joke. What's the difference between a baritone saxophone and a chain saw? You can tune a chain saw. The baritone sax is a big, unwieldy horn, and playing it is as much an athletic event as an artistic one; you've got to force a *lot* of air through that sucker even to get a blaat. Which is why, in the history of jazz, there've been so few great bari soloists: Harry Carney, who spent his whole career with the Ellington orchestra, and who got pitiably few solo opportunities; Serge Chaloff, aflame with genius but a junkie suicide in his early prime; and Mulligan.

Why Mulligan chose bari as his voice is a fascinating question, to which I think I know the answer. Bari is a cumbersome axe for solo playing, but absolutely essential to big band arranging. You *need* the damned thing in the reed section, to give a bottom, a foundation, to what the tenors and altos are doing. And Mulligan, whether he was playing with one of his pianoless quartets or with Dave Brubeck or with his wonderful (and unsuccessful) Concert Jazz Band—or with any of the astonishing array of people with whom he recorded—thought of himself primarily as a big band player. Let me elaborate on the magnificent plangency of that.

In Ira Gitler's indispensable collection of interviews, *From Swing to Bop*, Mulligan talks about his early years. It's worth quoting at length:

> By the end of the '40s the thing that was the most disturbing to me was that I could see that the bands, the dance bands, the name bands, were not going to survive. That's what was really upsetting to me....Man, I never thought about another thing—seriously, other than being a bandleader and writing music for bands. Dance music. So the big band got cut off from its own source, which is dance music.

Dance music: he says that three times in about as many sentences. And only if you understand what the big bands meant will you get what's behind his words. From the mid-thirties to the early fifties in America, jazz, in the form of big band music, *was* the American anthem. Never before or since has this, the only true national art form, enjoyed such an immediate, universal,



and visceral connection with that loose and baggy monster, the public. Jazz was for *dancing*. However harmonically complex and stunningly inventive, it was also something that the kids, the community, the society, could move to, dancing their own improvisation back at the improvisations of the guys on the bandstand—a real festival, next to which even the best rock concerts seem sadly *planned* pieces of business.

And Mulligan was born early enough to romanticize (as, of course, do I) that moment, and born late enough to witness its decay. By the late forties, the revolution fomented by Parker, Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk had already begun to establish jazz as "difficult," "challenging," even "angry." That revolution produced magnificent music, of course: but was there ever a revolution that did not destroy as many beautiful things as it created?

So you have to imagine Mulligan in the midst of all this. A dance band lover watching the bands drop like flies around him; a modernist who still yearns for the happy simplicities of Dixieland; a lanky guy with a winning grin, arrogant as hell about his talent, who nevertheless believes that, whatever else it is, the music should be *fun*. What do you do?

Well, what you do, after writing killer arrangements for the last of the big bands (Gene Krupa, Elliot Lawrence), is: you collaborate with Miles Davis and Gil Evans in 1949 on a small band that features lavish, subtle orchestration and short, tight solos—the "Birth of the Cool" band—that changes the history of the music; and then you form your pianoless quartet, emphasizing clever writing and counterpoint as much as solos, making your version of "My Funny Valentine" the first million-record seller in jazz history; you lead other versions of the quartet, and various large groups, for the next forty years, virtually defining the laid-back school of "West Coast Jazz" (although you, being sane, spend most of your life on the East Coast). And, oh yeah: you singlehandedly change the sound of your horn, from a low grumpy burr to something as solid but frothy as the head on a glass of Pilsner Urquell. You keep the faith of the big bands that were your nursery, the faith that the music is always, even impossibly, gay.

Mulligan kept the faith. And I think we've not yet begun to understand—to hear—how much his music has affected the way we think music is supposed to sound altogether. The next time you hear a jazzy music score, the next time you're in a little club with a half-decent band—hell, the next time you're riding in an elevator and the Muzak is listenable—check out those open chords, those silences, that subtle and loping beat. You'll be hearing a little bit of Mulligan. □

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The Jesus Seminar gets an 'F'

The Real Jesus
The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels
Luke Timothy Johnson
HarperSanFrancisco, $22, 192 pp.

Robert L. Wilken

The ostensible subject of this timely volume is the Jesus Seminar, a self-selected group of scholars who meet regularly to discuss the "historical" Jesus. But Johnson's real topic is the dire state of biblical scholarship within the academy, including seminaries and theological faculties, and its relation to the churches. Historical criticism, which once seemed to offer such promise for understanding the Scriptures, and hence Christian faith, seems more and more irrelevant to the church's life. As biblical scholarship has become captive to a reductionistic understanding of truth, it has proven itself a pliant instrument at the service of whatever new ideology is in fashion within our society. Lamentably, a venerable scholarly tradition, and, one might add, a rich theological heritage (for biblical scholarship was once a theological enterprise) is in disarray. The Jesus Seminar is only the most recent and visible sign of its capitulation to the cultural mood.

For readers who have not followed the Jesus Seminar (though its organizers have skillfully manipulated regular news stories in local newspapers), it is an association of some forty biblical scholars, convened twice a year by Robert Funk of the Westar Institute in Sonoma, California, and Dominic Crossan of DePaul University in Chicago. Its task is to analyze the Gospels and uncover the "real Jesus" who lies behind the texts. The seminar assumes, as do most biblical scholars today, that the Gospels are interpretive narratives constructed with various ideological and religious motives, not straightforward historical accounts. To pierce through these accounts to the "real Jesus" scholars must determine which material reported in the Gospels is authentic and what was added later. In principle this procedure is unobjectionable, though its results have been disappointing. It has been attempted many times in the last two centuries by scholars of different persuasions, always without success, that is, without winning consensus among other scholars. The hard fact is that the sources do not allow us to draw certain conclusions.

The Jesus Seminar, however, is interested in publicity, hence it needs results. To gain attention its organizers devised a clever system for supposedly deciding the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus and awakening curiosity about its work. After discussing particular sections of the Gospels its members vote with color-coded beads. Red: that's Jesus; pink: sure sounds like Jesus; gray: well, maybe; black, there's been some mistake. This procedure, as Luke John-

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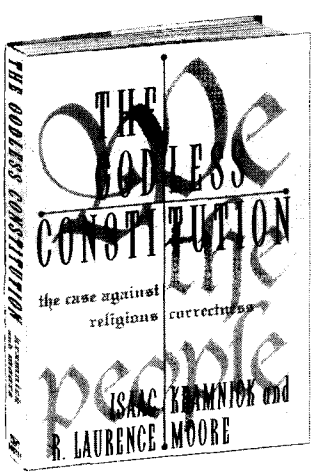
the case against religious correctness
Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore



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son observes, is biased against the authenticity of sayings attributed to Jesus. "It is in the very nature of scholars to vie with one another to be more critical, to be 'harder graders.' The procedure forces sayings to *prove* their authenticity, rather than their authenticity being assumed and the burden of proof being placed on showing inauthenticity." The whole enterprise is designed for self-promotion, not historical understanding. Moving about from city to city, the Seminar flatters local reporters by inviting them in to sit in on its deliberations, thereby gaining front-page coverage of the "results." In one city a headline on Easter Saturday announced that the Lord's prayer did not come from Jesus.

Not only are the scholarly claims of the Jesus Seminar fraudulent, but its leaders also have a religious and cultural agenda directed against the churches. In the words of Funk: "The religious establishment has not allowed the intelligence of high scholarship to pass through pastors and priests to a hungry laity." More conventional scholars, it is claimed, failed to report their results to a larger public. Again: "It isn't Jesus bashing...we want to liberate Jesus. The only Jesus most people want is the mythic one. They don't want the real Jesus. They want the one they can worship. The cultic Jesus."

Like other critics of orthodox Christianity, the members of the Jesus Seminar fashion a Jesus of their own making, a teacher who is freed of Christian tradition and devotion. One is reminded of Thomas Jefferson, no friend of Christianity, who spent winter evenings going through the Gospels deleting those sections he found unpalatable. "We must reduce our volume to the simple Evangelists; select, even from them, the very words only of Jesus, paring off the amphibologisms into which they have been led, by forgetting often, or not understanding, what had fallen from Him....There will be found remaining the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man. I have performed this operation for my own use, by cutting verse by verse out of the printed book, and arranging the material which is evidently his and which is as easily distinguished as diamonds in a dung hill." Parallels to the Jesus Seminar are striking: Jefferson wished to liberate Jesus from "priestly" and "Platonic" (Trinitarian) religion of Catholic Christianity, the Jesus Seminar wants to replace the cultic Jesus by the "real" Jesus of history, that is, the Jesus before the Apostles.

Yet it is not enough simply to criticize the hucksterism and religious prejudices of the Jesus Seminar. In its arrogant dismissal of the Christian theological tradition, and its contempt for the beliefs and practices of orthodox Christians, it reflects assumptions that are widespread in the guild. And it is to Johnson's credit that his book addresses these issues, not simply the silliness of the Jesus Seminar. The larger problem is that in its effort to be thoroughly historical, biblical scholarship has become radically unhistorical. For it presumes to interpret the New Testament without reference to a larger world of meaning provided by the ancient texts and early Christian tradition. By giving up the framework of the canonical Gospels, and conceiving of the sayings and deeds of Jesus as free-floating bits of historical data, the figure of Jesus becomes infinitely malleable. Without the narrative provided by the Gospels, the various "traditions" of words or deeds of Jesus lack context and can be arranged at will according to whatever principle or logic is deemed reasonable by the scholar.

The New Testament is a book that grew out of the early Christian community, a community that was brought together by the Resurrection of Jesus. "The Resurrection is the necessary and sufficient cause of the religious movement," writes Johnson, "as well as the literature that it generated...." If the Resurrection of Jesus is excluded there can be no satisfying interpretation of the books that make up the New Testament and of the person of Jesus. The real Jesus is the "resurrected Lord whose transforming Spirit is active in the community."

By focusing on the Resurrection of Jesus, Johnson challenges biblical scholarship to rethink its understanding of history. Yet, though his instincts are sound, his language in this section, for example, his qualifications about the term "historical" for the Resurrection of Jesus, is less certain and precise. In places he seems to set up the same kind of dichotomy between the "historical figure of Jesus" and "the living Lord Jesus" that led biblical scholars into difficulty in the first place. And his discussion about history's way of knowing would have profited from a consideration of Augustine's discussion of faith in *On the Usefulness of Believing*.

But Johnson knows the issues and deals with them thoughtfully and intelligently, and with theological insight. His book is an invitation to biblical scholars, and all Christian thinkers, to discover anew the interpretation of the Bible as a theological enterprise in service of the church's faith and life. And, he reminds us, the primary task of theology is not "the reform of the world's social structure, nor the ideological critique of the church as institution, nor the discovery of what is false or distorting in religious behavior, but the discernment and articulation of the work of the living God." To do that, biblical scholars must learn "to take less seriously the judgment of our academic colleagues and more seriously the judgment of God, 'before whose judgment seat we all shall stand.'" □

Robert L. Wilken *is the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Virginia. His most recent book is* Remembering the Christian Past *(Eerdmans: 1995).*

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THE RENAISSANCE'S FIFTH COLUMN

Jesuits
A Multibiography
Jean Lacouture, translated by Jeremy Leggatt
Counterpoint, $29.50, 550 pp.

Ron Hansen

Jésuites: Une Multibiographie flew up the bestseller lists in France three years ago when it was published there in two volumes, *Les Conquérants* and *Les Revenants*. This fine translation is an abridgment, subtracting some European material that was felt to be too parochial for a wider readership, but offering still a fascinating history of the Society of Jesus through the biographies of its more eminent members.

Lacouture begins, of course, with Iñigo de Loyola, a hot-headed squire in the Spanish court who was the factotum to a viceroy when his right leg was shattered by a cannon ball in the French siege of Pamplona. While hospitalized in the family mansion, and hovering not far from death, Iñigo fell upon a book of saints and found a fresh perspective on the sins and vanities of his life. A hermit year in Manresa, where he was graced with the theological illuminations that would inspire his *Spiritual Exercises*, was followed by a forestalled pilgrimage to Jerusalem after which he recognized the need for higher education if he was to preach and minister to others.

So he went to the University of Paris where, by guiding fellow humanities students through his spiritual exercises, he gathered six other "friends in the Lord" who laid the foundation for the religious congregation by taking vows on August 15, 1534, at the chapel of Our Lady at Montmartre. Iñigo was by then Ignatius and a master of arts; in three years he was ordained, and four years after that, in Rome, he was elected the first superior general of the new society, the only vote against him being his own. In spite of his hankering to go back to Jerusalem, Ignatius would stay in Rome for the final fifteen years of his life, founding colleges, handling administrative tasks, and composing more than seven thousand letters to the scattered Jesuits he'd offered in faithful service to the pope.

Conquering the new world for Christ was the mission then. In 1540, one of the company's foremost protectors, John III, King of Portugal, requested a missionary to go east with his fleet and carry the gospel to Asia. Although it was precisely the kind of evangelizing office that Ignatius formerly sought for himself, he instead sent his good friend, Francis Xavier.

At first a fervent and inexhaustible "Christian Ulysses" whose only concern in India was to convert a Hindu population he thought of as "the most perverse in the world," Xavier gradually came to realize that he was "being used as a respected and acquiescent accomplice in the fearful piracy that was Portuguese colonization. And, going deeper still, [he saw] the utter incompatibility between the gospel and European conquest." Sailing farther east to Japan, a far different Xavier discovered "a humankind whose civilization was no longer to be denied but to be explored, through active exchange and mutual fertilization. It was a first glimpse of the anthropological approach that would become the Jesuits' glory, from Matteo Ricci and Roberto de Nobili in China and India to the Latin American trailblazers and to Pierre Charles in Africa."

In 1603 in South America, Jesuits began founding "reductions," or self-supporting parishes, with the hope of forming utopian communities for the Guaraní Indians, but the fact that "each of these colonies was slotted into the hi-

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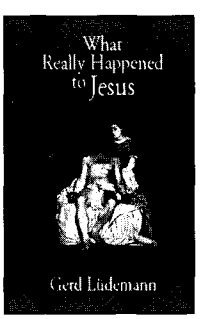

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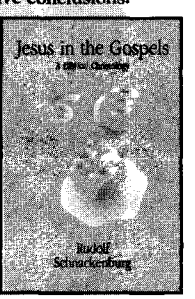

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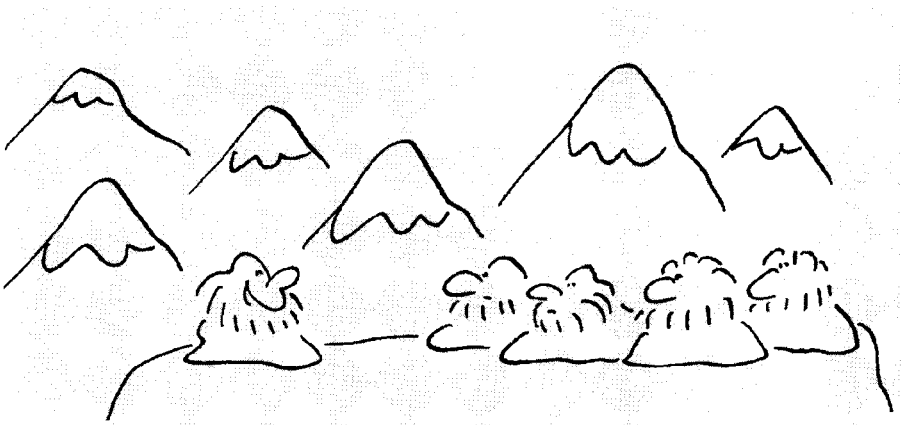


"All right now—let's see who can be the least competitive...."

erarchical machinery managed from Madrid and Rome" finally doomed them. The film *The Mission* fairly portrays how the heads of state in Portugal and Spain combined to destroy the Guaraní Republic and slaughter or deport to Europe the Jesuit fathers who fought their efforts at hunting gold and exploiting the native people.

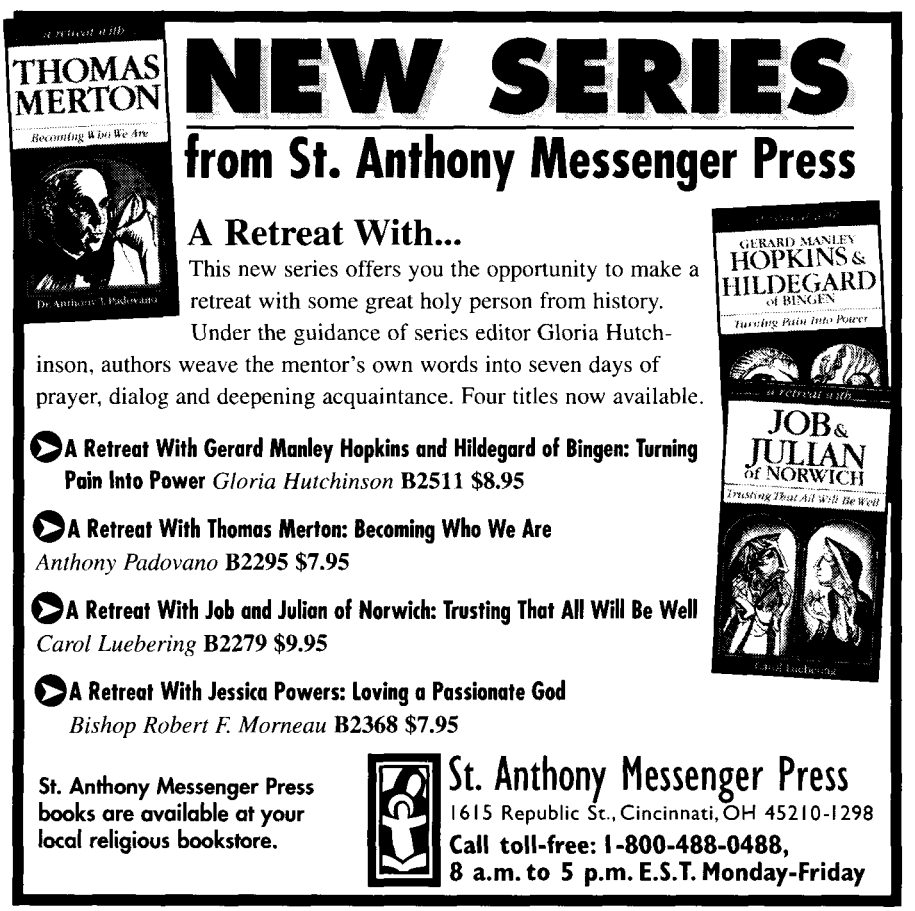
That was just the first of what would become a full-blown assault on the Company of Jesus as the monarchies and parliaments of the Enlightenment sought to rid their countries of Jesuits who were seen as interfering, half-monk Papalists and foreign agents, "as a kind of Renaissance 'fifth column.'" The offensive began in Portugal where, in 1759, four hundred Jesuits were expelled from their country, and it found support from the Jansenists and *philosophes* of France who presented "the Society of Jesus as a war machine, a cunning instrument of oppression, a tool in the hands of a foreign potentate." Spain and Italy followed suit. "It was on July 21, 1773—233 years after the company's solemn investiture by Pope Paul III—that another pope, Clement XIV, jostled, harassed, and threatened by the four Most Christian sovereigns of Lisbon, Paris, Madrid, and Naples—all shrines of Jesuitism—abolished Ignatius's Company."

Centuries earlier, in a letter to the Portuguese Jesuits, Ignatius had stressed the importance of holy obedience in their rule by saying each member of the company ought to be *perinde ac cadaver* (like a corpse) when given an order or instruction by a superior. That abolition of will and perfect meekness and indifference to one's own thoughts and impulses were never more apparent than in the company's stunning submission to the papal brief *Dominus ac redemptor* which ordered its suppression. The frankness, courage, and fierce devotion to their apostolates that had garnered such hatred for them from governments were nowhere in evidence as a great religious order softly and silently fell prostrate before an unholy annihilation.

But the Machiavellian Protestant monarchs Catherine of Russia and Frederick of Prussia were in need of the Jesuits as educators and were only too happy to publicly disobey the Roman pontiff, and so the company managed to stay alive in those northern countries, and in associations such as the Society of the Heart of Jesus elsewhere, until it was formally reinstated by Pope Pius VII on August 7, 1814.

Lacouture calls these Jesuits of the nineteenth-century restoration *revenants*, ghosts, for though the fathers had earlier pioneered in Western humanism and invented egalitarian cultural exchange and respect for others, "here they were transformed into bloodhounds of Bourbon and Roman conservatism, into militants for the alliance of Cross and Crown, into propagandists for the restoration of kings, into guardians of the European order established at the Congress of Vienna."

The company found itself again in the worker-priest movement, the anti-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Fascist underground of World War II, and theologians like Henri de Lubac, Teilhard de Chardin, and Jean Daniélou, and the rebirth of a critical Catholic intelligence. "But it was not so much the renewal of theological research that gave the Jesuit thinking of the day its originality. It was rather its methodical study of the origins of Christianity—origins that these young researchers readily sought in Judaism."

The finest chapter in the book is Lacouture's profile of the famous scientist-theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the priest he refers to as "Jesuitissimus," whose fairly cautious evolutionary theories and humanistic concerns caused him to be silenced by the Holy See, his masterpiece, *The Phenomenon of Man*, finding publication only after his death on Easter Sunday, 1955. And there are first-rate studies, too, of the failed experiment of forming female Jesuits, of the order's spotty relations with the Jews, of Jesuitphobia throughout history, and of Superior General Pedro Arrupe and the recent heightened emphasis on faith and justice.

Jean Lacouture is a former foreign correspondent for *Le Monde* and *France-Soir* and the author of thirty books, including biographies of Charles De Gaulle, Ho Chi Minh, André Malraux, and François Mauriac. Even with the omission of a great deal of parochial material, fully one quarter of the book seems located in France, which only seems a failing when one realizes that Lacouture has simultaneously neglected Edmund Campion and other English Jesuits, Italians who are not prelates, Pierre Marquette and the North American martyrs, Miguel Pro and the persecution of the Mexican church in the twenties, and a host of other saints that no history would normally be without.

But the book succeeds because it is full of passion, opinions, and apt quotations. *Jesuits: A Multibiography* is finally a pleasure to read, the spirited, craftily researched work of a confident and entertaining writer who's wholly in love with his story. □

Ron Hansen's *new novel is* Atticus *(HarperCollins).*

A NEEDED RESTORATION

Boston Bohemia, 1881-1900
Ralph Adams Cram, Life and Architecture
Douglass Shand-Tucci
University of Massachusetts Press, $50, 569 pp.

Joseph W. Goetz

Cousin Jasper was right. In his advice to Charles Ryder, the protagonist of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, upon the latter's coming-up to Oxford, Jasper lists people and groups to be avoided: "Beware of the Anglo-Catholics—they're all sodomites with unpleasant accents." If we are to believe the most recent of the novelist's biographers—assuming Charles Ryder is, indeed, his alter ego—Waugh did nothing of the kind. Neither did Ralph Adams Cram, the American architect, convert to Anglo-Catholicism from New Hampshire Unitarianism, and one of the founders of *Commonweal*.

Although the Oxford Apostles (Newman, Keble, Pusey, etc.) were uninterested in ceremony as such, later phases of the Oxford Movement did in fact connect traditional Anglican doctrine with increasingly elaborate ritual. Thus emerged the aesthetic wing of Anglo-Catholicism. It has been something of a commonplace that "high" Episcopalianism, especially when actively prohibited by ecclesiastical authorities—as was the case in both England and the United States during the nineteenth century—served as a religious shelter for sexual outsiders. Thus Cousin Jasper's sweeping albeit unkind generalization.

Ralph Adams Cram is best remembered—when he is remembered—for his hundreds of churches and college buildings from New York to California: West Point, New York's Saint Thomas Church, the unfinished Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, Princeton's chapel and the graduate school, Rice University, the never-built Japanese Parliament buildings, and many, many others. The author of this learned and first of two-

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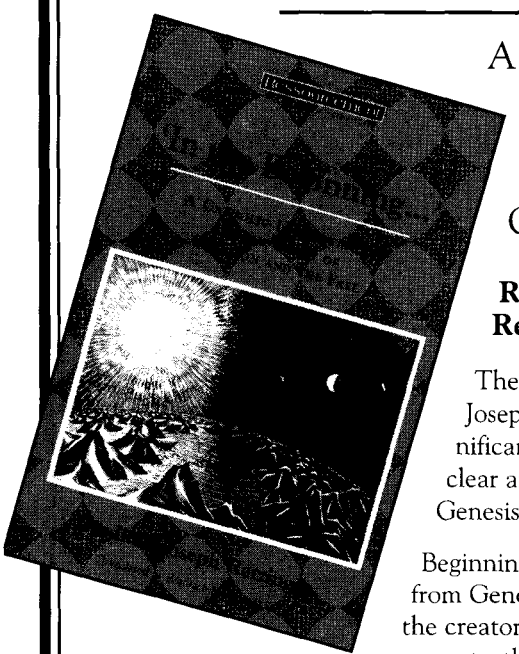
volume study on Cram proposes the thesis that late nineteenth-century Boston aestheticism and bohemianism served as code words for homosexuality, and that Cram, both formed in and contributing to that cultural model, cannot be understood without taking account of it. Shand-Tucci makes a very good case for his thesis, namely that a brilliant band of architects, painters, poets, photographers, book designers, and musicians formed a company of like-minded votaries worshiping at a shrine designed by the Pre-Raphaelites, set to music by Richard Wagner, and presided over by the divine Oscar himself. The vexing question which keeps recurring as one reads this long and fascinating book is, "Who cares?"

Shand-Tucci obviously does, for he sees in the very diverse productions of the Boston Bohemians a sensibility charged with homoeroticism which in turn bestows on them a "modernism" hitherto unremarked upon by cultural historians. The author describes Cram's early masterpiece, All Saints, in Ashmont, Massachusetts, as "voluptuous," arguing that his buildings were "not only expressive of [Cram's] conscious beliefs and convictions, religious and artistic, but also of his unconscious life." He likens Cram's churches to "Trojan Horses in Puritan New England," but reads into all of Cram's early work a startlingly contemporary aesthetic. The conservative Gothicist was yet to come. Architectural historians have fixed on Frank Lloyd Wright as having introduced Japanese art and architecture to an American audience, but at about the same time or earlier Cram was building superb residences influenced by Japanese domestic architecture and his own book on Japan's arts continues in print one hundred years later.

A memory of some of Cram's group survives: photographers still esteem the pioneering work of Fred Holland Day; books designed by Daniel Updike fetch big prices among knowing bibliophiles. One of the few women associated with the Boston Bohemians, the poet Louise Imogen Guiney, was a committed feminist and, in a recent biography, is described as "the first modern nun." The varied buildings of Cram and his partner (and, according to the author, possible lover) Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, have rekindled enthusiasm among postmodern architects and architectural historians. For the rest, alas, their names are forgotten.

Shand-Tucci, however, joins a growing number of cultural historians in decrying the "closet-ing" of uranism, as homoeroticism was then termed, as a formative influence upon the arts, and architecture in particular. Once more the love that dare not speak its name is broadcast as vastly more important a cultural factor than has been previously allowed. If this book sounds like a lovingly researched, massively learned, and regrettably repetitive "outing," so be it. No student of American architecture or indeed of our wider culture will want to miss it, because it not only introduces readers to what the author claims to be the first American *avant-*

"In the Beginning . . ."



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garde, but revives awareness of an extraordinarily gifted and once-influential architect.

Volume 2 of this study is eagerly awaited. There the mature Cram, whose fervent medievalism was combined with New Deal liberalism, will receive the long overdue attention he and his work deserve. As his role in the founding of this magazine testifies, Ralph Adams Cram was not only a remarkable architect who changed the character of American church buildings, but a social critic whose message, had it been heeded, would have made for a very different world from the one we live in. Along with critics like Lewis Mumford (a *Commonweal* contributor), he believed that the evolution from small, organic communities (*Gemeinschaft*) to huge, soulless cities (*Gesellschaft*) has wrought terrible damage on the human spirit. In addition, after a long life of single-minded commitment to the beauty of worship coupled with a selfless devotion to a wife afflicted by mental illness for much of their marriage, a strong argument can be made that he was a saint. □

The Reverend Joseph W. Goetz *is pastor of Saint Paul Church in Yellow Springs, Ohio.*

IT'S HOLY, SO SELL IT

Material Christianity
Religion and Popular Culture in America
Colleen McDannell
Yale University Press, $35, 337 pp.

Consumer Rites
The Buying and Selling of American Holidays
Leigh Eric Schmidt
Princeton University Press, $24.95, $19.95 paper, 363 pp.

Michele Dillon

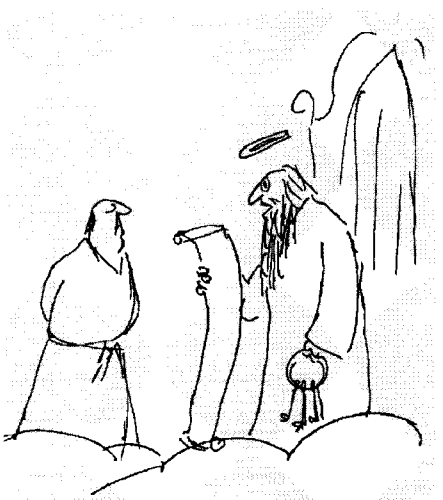
These two books provide a refreshing rejoinder to critics who decry the secular materialism of contemporary society. Focusing on different historical blendings of Christianity and American popular culture, both authors highlight that religion is not confined to churches or private acts of piety. Colleen McDannell uses an historical case-study approach to argue for the importance of the shared meanings people derive from their religious material culture, an interest driven by her desire to scramble the artificial division between sacred and profane.

Along with recent research in cultural studies, McDannell acknowledges that people impute multiple meanings to the same artifact or text; yet her main emphasis is that "diverse peoples use religious objects in very similar ways." Photographs of home interiors taken by the Farm Security Administration in the 1930s and '40s illustrate that Catholics and Protestants alike, for example, displayed religious prints and built home shrines. Although the primary function of religious objects historically, as today, may have been devotional for some people and decorative for others, what impresses McDannell is that as they pervade commercialized "secular" culture, they retain religious connotations.

Focusing on the symbolic importance of the family Bible as a treasured possession, McDannell uses nineteenth-century probate records to show that Bibles were common across diverse social class and ethnic Protestant households. Within the household, influenced by assumptions that women's sensibility was naturally virtuous, it was mothers who had responsibility for religious education. Gender stratification may be less difficult to maintain when it comes to burying the dead, but class differences clearly endure to the end of life. The naturally beautiful Laurel Hill Cemetery outside Philadelphia, founded in 1835 by John Jay Smith, a bereaved Quaker parent, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and amateur botanist, became an exclusive and sacred place wherein only the "proper" Philadelphians were buried; the less fortunate came for "park" visits and to beg.

Catholics, too, know how to harmonize commerce and devotion. McDannell presents a fascinating account of how the industriousness and devotional vision of Father Edward Sorin, the founder of the University of Notre Dame, was instrumental in establishing Marian devotion and a successful "mail-order" Lourdes water business in America. Letters written between 1872 and 1879 suggest that men and women equally believed in the holy water's healing power on the body.

A different perspective on the body is offered by McDannell's discussion of the wearing of "garments" (undergarments) by contemporary Mormons. From thirty-seven in-depth interviews, McDannell discovers that physical discomfort and occasional personal embarrassment aside, garments remind Mormons of their covenant with God, and, especially for the religiously ambivalent, indicate communal loyalty. The garments also play a significant role in courtship rituals, and here there are gender differences. Whereas garments on a man returned from a two-year proselytizing mission signal maturity and availability for marriage, they make the "older" woman "less desirable."



"You made $8 million on a gimmick?"

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Clearly, the cult of femininity dies hard. This is further illustrated by McDannell's discussion of the stress by Catholic and Protestant commentators, as recently as the 1980s, on the necessity of emphasizing the manliness of Christ in church art and devotions. A less engrossing read is the book's final chapter, which traces the evolution of Christian retailing of religious goods from 1840.

People interested in merchandise can turn to Leigh Eric Schmidt's *Consumer Rites*. Concerned with understanding the association of women with consumption and festivity in American culture, Schmidt analyzes the evolution of Valentine's Day, Christmas, Easter, and Mother's Day as major celebratory occasions. Schmidt's richly textured story is, in short, about how the initial economic opposition between religious and public holidays was transformed between the late-eighteenth and early-twentieth centuries into what is now normal: holy days as sales events.

A primary theme that emerges from Schmidt's discussion is the historical flexibility of images, and their manipulative capabilities depending on the context in which they are used. Readers may be interested to know, for example, that in 1809, Santa Claus was represented as a "sober Republican," in 1810 as a "saintly bishop in episcopal regalia," and in 1848 as a peddler. Mid-nineteenth century Valentine cards, while smoothing the awkwardness of courtship, also lampooned all who were in any way marginal or different, and were particularly harsh in their depictions of men and women who deviated from expected gender roles.

It is important to remember, then, that while the commercial refashioning, and at times, subversion, of the original meanings of various holy days was a merchant-driven element of mass production more generally, the messages peddled—whether an insulting valentine, a feminized Jesus Easter souvenir card, or Mother's Day flowers—resonated with people's fantasies and fears. Nor were churches out of the merchandising loop. Schmidt documents their participation in the late-nineteenth-century proliferation of Easter holy cards and souvenirs, and similar activity in behalf of Mother's Day, despite the greater tensions between commercialisation and the domestic space of motherhood aroused by the occasion.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for the blending of religion and commerce comes from Wanamaker's department store in Philadelphia. An active Presbyterian businessman, John Wanamaker transformed his store's interior court into a religious spectacle for Christmas and Easter. Lavishly decorated, it displayed candlesticks, statues, and religious tapestries and flags to create an awe-inspiring gothic cathedral ambience, aided by having what was then the largest pipe organ in the world, and its own musical director and hymnals. Customers' letters thanked Wanamaker for honoring Jesus Christ, and for inspiring a feeling of communal togetherness.

Although disposed toward the civic celebration of Christmas made possible by the fusion of commercial and Christian interests, Schmidt is nonetheless sensitive to its exclusive religious foundations, and to the ways in which its consumer motifs exclude the poor. He also discusses the personal ambivalence long experienced toward Christmas as recorded in nineteenth-century diaries—the contentment of shopping and gift-giving coupled with weariness and disappointment over gifts not received. The same diaries also testify to the melding of church and commerce evident in the public domain.

Both authors provide convincing evidence that the sacred and the secular constitute popular culture. As with all interpretive research, questions concerning the choice of examples, the selectivity and representativeness of the voices presented, and the generalizability of personal meanings to a broader gendered, social class, ethnic, or national meaning linger. Photographs of home and store interiors, for example, while fascinating and telling us a lot, are interpretively ambiguous. This methodological caution aside, however, the seamlessness between sacred and profane leaves us to ponder the place of the transcendent in contemporary lives. While the dismantling of boundaries is to be welcomed as democratic, isn't there still something sacred, and even emancipatory, about the sacred? □

Michele Dillon *teaches sociology at Yale University.*

THE TRADITION IS TO CHANGE

The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner
Richard Lennan
Oxford University Press, $55, 289 pp.

Dennis M. Doyle

When I first read Karl Rahner in graduate school, I was directed to his philosophically "grounding" pieces. In those essays I learned of the *Vorgriff*, of the distinction between the categorical and the transcendental, of the fundamental option, of the ontology of the *Realsymbol*, of the ultimate identification of the immanent and the economic Trinity, and of God as both the *woraufhin* of our transcendence and as the formal cause of the human spirit. And then I vaguely recall a super-cali-natural-istic-existential-dosis, or something like that. [Editor's note: we think he means the "supernatural existential."]

It was rich fare for a theology student in love with abstractions. I knew also that Rahner often "applied" these concepts to practical issues, and I read with great interest some of these efforts at practical application. Yet I read them always through the lens of the more "ground-

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ing" concepts, concepts that have continued to be of immense help to me over the years.

Like a skilled optometrist, Richard Lennan has crafted a lens that reverses the image. For him, what grounds Rahner is his dedication to addressing the practical and pastoral issues that have faced the Catholic church in the second half of the twentieth century. What kind of a church must the Catholic church be in order to come to grips with science, secularity, and pluralism? Lennan shows how Rahner's more theoretical constructions were most often developed in response to the need to find conceptual tools for tackling very practical ecclesial questions. By rooting the philosophical in the practical, Lennan provides a clear context for explaining many otherwise elusive concepts.

The primary contributions of this study are three: it traces the historical development of Rahner's thinking before, during, and after Vatican II; it focuses on the practical ecclesial issues that constituted Rahner's own primary concerns; and it makes a fairly convincing case for Rahner as a "centrist" whose approach combines the deepest and most legitimate concerns of both the Left and the Right in the church today.

I say "fairly" convincing because the point is prey to the same traps as any other claim to be "centrist." There are few intellectuals who cannot find a way to uncover a significant spectrum of positions to their left and to their right and then declare themselves the "center." What justifies Lennan's sympathy for the claim that Rahner made about himself is the genuineness of Rahner's simultaneous commitment to principles that are so strongly associated with either extreme.

On the one hand, Rahner's loyalty, concern, and love for the church were evident throughout his life and work. For Rahner, the church is not simply a human construct, but the sacrament of God's grace. Though the church was never to be simply identified with God, it continues in this world Christ's saving presence. Not just an abstract idea, the church as a concrete reality has certain social and juridical structures that are essential to it, including the episcopal college, the papacy, the sacraments, and the three-fold hierarchical ministry.

On the other hand, Rahner's dedication to the church led him to call for significant changes in the way that its essential structures needed to be shaped in order to most effectively engage the contemporary world. For example, Rahner held that a model of episcopal collegiality is more appropriate today than a monarchical model. He saw no reason why episcopal offices might not someday be filled by committees. Authority in general could be much more consultative and less centralized. Many complex decisions, including artificial birth control for married couples, could even be left to the consciences

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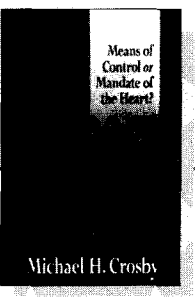

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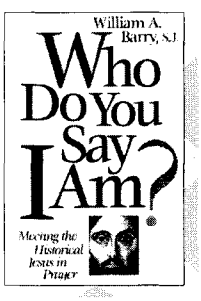

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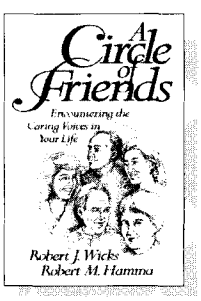

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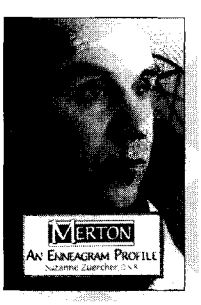

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of individuals. Local churches need to be recognized as primary manifestations of the church. What we now know as parishes might each come to resemble more a diocese, such that "pastors" might come to resemble "bishops." Various Christian churches have already reached a point at which intercommunion and pulpit-sharing are appropriate. Ordinations could be given to a much wider range of ministers, not simply because the church needs more ordained ministers, but because those Christians who are actually performing the ministerial work of the church need its sacramental support.

Lennan demonstrates that Rahner held, paradoxically, that change was necessary for the church to maintain continuity with its identity and mission throughout history. A refusal to change means losing touch with the tradition as it has developed organically. Moreover, a static church cannot address adequately the fluctuations of the contemporary world. Early on, Rahner viewed the church's own internal dynamism as the main catalyst for authentic change; later he viewed the needs of the world as dictating what the church must become.

Rahner envisioned the world becoming increasingly secular, and local churches becoming small intentional communities that would call for more conscientious participation from fewer members. This "church of the diaspora," as Rahner called it, could more than balance off in quality and commitment what it would lose in numbers.

Lennan admits that the church has not gone the way of many of Rahner's predictions. But, he argues, Rahner's great contributions to tackling present-day dilemmas lie in his articulation of an ecclesiology that integrates continuity and change and in his carving out a path between the left-right quagmires.

I find the latter claim to be problematic. Not only do many voices purport to represent the "center," but I think that given the current spectrum of opinion, most people would find Rahner to fall somewhere to the left, especially on practical ecclesial matters. Lennan, who does a good job in raising critical discussion of many individual points in Rahner's work, does not bring him into a full-scale systematic dialogue with other significant figures of the twentieth century, such as Metz or von Balthasar, whose voices would help to place him.

But that would be another book. The book that Lennan did write is a very good one,which, by reversing the common approach, brings Rahner into focus. It is a scholarly study, but written clearly enough to be accessible to a motivated nonspecialist. Unfortunately, the price tag will make it inaccessible to many.

Rahner may not be the center, but I agree with Lennan that Rahner gives good witness to both the Left and the Right as a vivid demonstration that one can love the church unconditionally without giving up all hope for its radical improvement. □

Dennis M. Doyle *teaches theology at the University of Dayton.*

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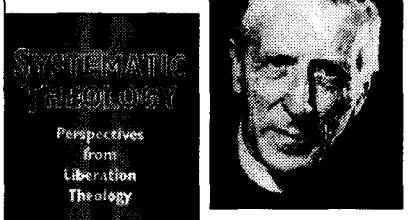

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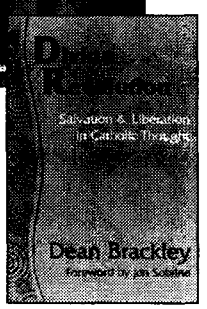

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TOUGH LOVE

Embodying Forgiveness
A Theological Analysis
L. Gregory Jones
Eerdmans Publishing Co., $18, 313 pp.

Lisa Sowle Cahill

L. Gregory Jones attempts to venture beyond the impasse posed by the alternatives of Christian pacifism and Christian realism by directing moral attention to the concrete practices that make reconciliation of enemies possible. In short, he places forgiveness within the texture of community. "Forgiveness ought to be understood as a way of life that requires the cultivation of specific habits and practices," he writes. Drawing eclectically on the Bible, theology (Aquinas, Barth, Bonhoeffer), philosophy (Nietzsche, Alasdair MacIntyre), literature (Dostoevsky, Flannery O'Connor, Simon Weisenthal, Toni Morrison), film (Clint Eastwood in *Unforgiven*) as well as anecdotes and stories (from Auschwitz, Israel, Armenia, El Salvador, the African-American slave experience), Jones presents an interesting if complex argument.

Of course, habits of forgiveness occur across cultures and religions. Still, forgiveness is above all integral to Christian belief in a triune God of self-giving communion. Christian forgiveness is a way of living in God's Spirit under the power of the eschatological kingdom and in a relation of deepening friendship with God. According to Jones, forgiveness flourishes within a specific set of Christian practices: baptism and Eucharist; confession, repentance, and excommunication; prayer and healing. In this way, Jones takes pains to differentiate Christian forgiveness from the therapeutic variety. Christians do not buy cheap grace by bypassing issues of sin, culpability, rightful anger, and punishment. Insofar as his first two chapters mount an attack on cheap grace and therapeutic forgiveness, Jones seems skeptical about the potential of a religious experience of God's love to make forgiveness spontaneous. Rather, becoming "holy people, people of the Truth" seems to require hard work, discipline, and even a constant consciousness of the differences between Christians and other people.

Two questions could be raised in response. Is self-sacrificing forgiveness, and even Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, derivative from something more fundamental, namely compassionate love and mercy? Second, can self-righteousness be better avoided if it is oriented empathetically toward the other before it is cultivated as a virtue of the self?

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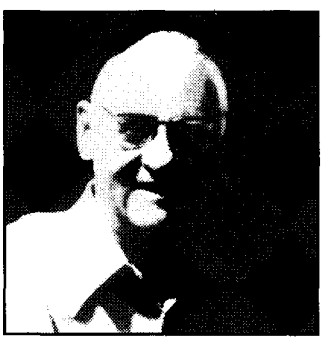

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ANGELO SCOLA

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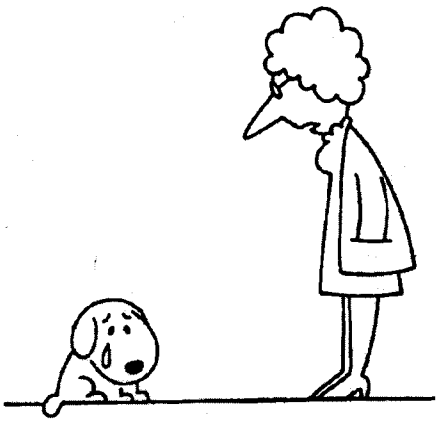
Jones goes on to note that forgiveness calls for pardon in some circumstances, rectification of wrong in others, and sometimes even retributive punishment. The suffering of victims must not be trivialized, destructiveness must be lamented, and righteous anger must be given a powerful place in restorative love. In this context, Jones concludes that the biblical God can be wrathful, hell really exists, and righteous indignation and prophetic judgment are often justified. Perhaps paradoxically, however, he also insists that the Christian experience of "the God whose love moves to reconciliation by means of costly forgiveness" is ultimately incompatible with the cultivation of habits of hatred.

This is an imaginative and provocative essay. Jones's argument moves between theological claims which are relatively abstract and narratives of particular incidents which are compellingly concrete. As a consequence, what formalized Christian forgiveness-enhancing practices are actually supposed to look like in concrete communities is often difficult to discern. For example, on the practice of Eucharist he writes, "[E]ucharistic practice suggests that, by encountering the real presence of the crucified and risen Christ in his forgiving love, we can bear the past truthfully." He adds inspiring human stories like the account of a Palestinian priest who locked the church doors during Mass one day and refused to administer Communion to his divided flock until they turned and made peace with their neighbors. He provokes the Christian imagination by relating how the African Masai integrated into eucharistic preparation their local custom of "passing grass" to resolve conflicts and establish peace among villagers. Yet the result of this multipronged approach to eucharistic practice seems diffuse. No doubt, concrete practices will have to be developed within and nuanced to particular communities. The problem is how, by means of theological reflection and practical examples, to help individual Christians, families, and congregations initiate and sustain that process.

Jones's book could be complemented by Donald Shriver's *An Ethic for Enemies* (Oxford), which also begins by establishing the importance of forgiveness as part of Christian social ethics. Having a more explicitly political orientation, Shriver develops three contemporary examples of how reconciliation was actually accomplished: between Germans and Americans, Japan and the U.S., and African-Americans and the enslaving culture. Each of these accounts is detailed enough so that one can enter into its unfolding dynamic, although no one could serve as an absolute model for imitation. Indeed, at the end of *Embodying Forgiveness*, Jones makes a similar narrative move by analyzing in more depth three literary accounts of forgiveness or its refusal.

The foundational document for Christian identity is structured around four narratives whose rich symbolism conveys similar yet distinctive portraits of God, Christ, and redemption. Indeed, the New Testament reminds us of the limits of systematic theological discourse as an instigator of Christian practice. Narrative, poetry, imagery, and prayer as well as human relations and practices themselves, still seem the best way to engage our affections and motivate behavior. □



"I can get another sofa pillow, that's not what hurts. What hurts is my loss of faith in you."

Lisa Sowle Cahill *is professor of theology at Boston College. Her* Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics *will be published this year by Cambridge University Press.*

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LIFE & DEATH AT A DISTANCE

Chris Anderson

I was walking on the bluff beyond the seminary, as I often do now that I am studying theology. There is a rutted road and then a path through the blackberry hummocks and dry grasses to an oak grove where I sit and watch the birds. A downy woodpecker is always going about its work in the upper branches. Lower down, chickadees bicker and flute. Soon the abstraction and intensity of the morning's lectures start draining out of me. From beneath the trees I look out over the brow of the seminary hill to the wide fields of the valley floor.

That hot autumn day, as I was on the way to the oak grove, I heard what I later read was the first of several shotgun blasts. I didn't think much of it. The sound came from far enough away to be muffled, indistinct. The next blast (a minute or so later?) reminded me of a large book hitting the floor in some adjacent room. And then the first of the sirens started whining. In the next minute I may have heard the next two shotgun blasts—I'm not sure—since another siren, and then another, and then a dozen fire trucks and police cars started up and began intersecting somewhere close by. I felt as if I were in a tower looking down on the people and movements below me—the seminary hill is about three hundred feet high—except that I was listening instead of looking because a wall of alder and fir blocked my view of the trucks screaming below.

I was only curious. A fire? I came into the grove and sat down and ate my lunch. The oaks broke the sun into shadows and the birds came, as they always do. I threw my apple core into the brush and read another chapter of von Balthasar.

The horror was in the paper the next day: An estranged husband, distraught and angry, had gunned down his wife on the lawn of their house in the little town of Scotts Mills, about five miles up the road; then in turn murdered each of his three little children. The last one, a baby, he shot in his mother-in-law's arms before a neighbor dragged him to the sidewalk. The grandmother was only slightly wounded, but the rest—the mother and those three little girls—were dead. Each blast I heard walking to the oaks and looking out at the fields was the sound of death sudden and senseless and horrible. And the gaps between shots—those gaps as I opened my lunch and took out my sandwich—were the children running across the lawn, scrambling away into the flowers? Was the grandmother begging?

There were these two moments one day in the fall: a man walking out into the fields and thinking about theology; another man, not much younger, just up the road, hunting down his family with a shotgun.

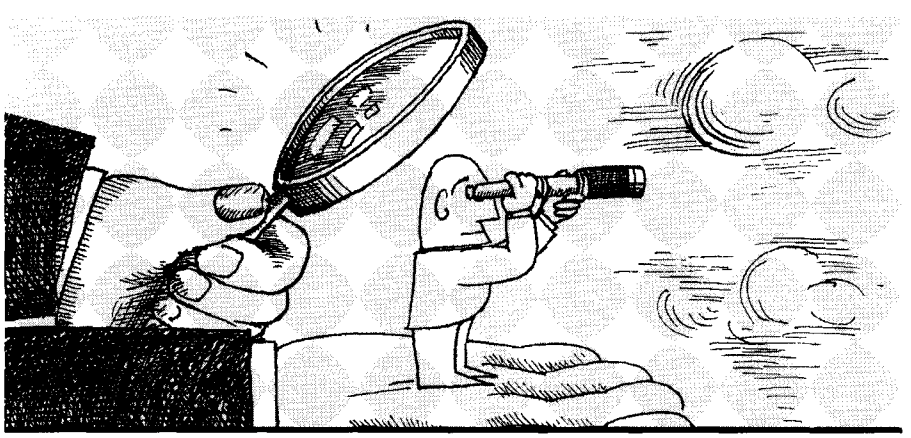
What do we do with this? What can this possibly mean?

In a way the answers are too easy. It's not hard to read a coincidence this horrible as still another example of Christianity's impotence. The constant death of children everywhere denies the Christian claim of the love that so redeems the world. It's only a little more difficult to argue in the opposite direction, explaining away the unexplainable with pieties about heaven and forgiveness: Christ has a special place for the little children; in all their innocence they are now playing on the grassy slopes of paradise.

Von Balthasar would connect the two moments in a more profound way. Christ conquered death by first enduring it, he would say. Christianity doesn't deny suffering but embraces it. The risen Lord is the one who was crucified.

But I can tell you how it seems to me. The moments feel separate. They won't fit together in my mind. I still walk out to the oak grove and the theology stills drains away. My vague and restless faith is just as vague and restless as ever, no less secure than before the blasts and the sirens, no more resolved. The intellectual and personal pressures that brought me to the seminary remain in force. And yet the sense of the horror of the murders remains in force, too, however muffled. The loss is abstract for me only because I received it at my little distance, up in the tower of my private thoughts and needs. I can't make it mean anything.

I wonder, on the day of the Crucifixion, what was going on in the rooms and streets and the fields nearby. Who was kneading dough or sweeping the floor? Who was lost in thought? Who was watching the birds? □



Chris Anderson *is associate professor of English at Oregon State University. He and his family live in Corvallis, Oregon. This year he is studying at Mount Angel Seminary.*

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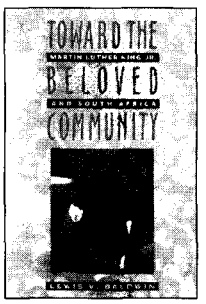

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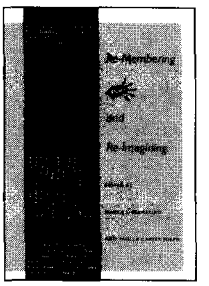

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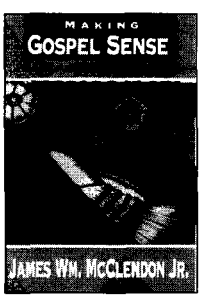

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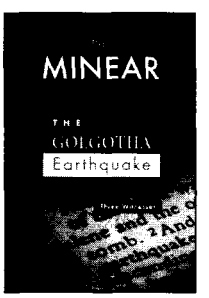

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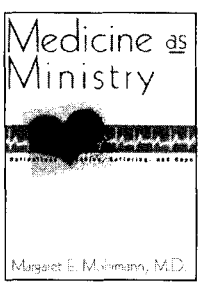

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